

COBALT-SERIES

谷
瑞恵

伯爵と妖精

涙の秘密をおしえて

集英社



アーミン

エドガーの従者でレイヴンの姉。一度は命を落とすが、アザラシ妖精として甦り、再びエドガーに仕える。

ユリシス

エドガーの宿敵プリンスの側近。一見15、6の少年に見えるが正体は不明。妖精をあつかう力を持ち、青騎士伯爵の称号を得たエドガーを敵視している。

レイヴン

エドガーの従者で、神秘的な雰囲気のある少年。武術は相当な腕を持ち、主人には完璧に忠実。

ニコ

猫の姿をした妖精。リディアの幼なじみで相棒。ふてぶてしい性格だが、身なりや食事にはうるさく、紳士を気取っている。



リディア

妖精の姿が見え、話もできる少女。エドガーが伯爵となるのを助けた縁で妖精博士として雇われ、さらに、わけあってエドガーと形だけの婚約を交わす。エドガーの真意がつかめないまま、揺れる気持ちを見つめ直すため、休暇をとって故郷に帰るが…。

エドガー

貴族の家に生まれたが、プリンス率いる謎の組織に売り飛ばされ、苛酷な運命を経た後に、リディアの協力で青騎士伯爵の地位を手に入れる。冷酷にプリンスへの復讐を企む一方で、すぐにリディアをあまい言葉で口説く。

伯爵と妖精

【登場人物紹介】

Chapter 1 - The Creatures in the City of Magic

Recently, there has been a series of murders taking place in London. The location where the incidents were occurring was at the London Bridge, one of London's famous places.

Running across the entire city of London, looping into a curve, was the river the bridge sat atop of: the Thames River. The bridge was first built to be a defensive wall, guarding the city since a long time ago.

At the time, not only did it block enemy ships from entering, it was also used for offensive attacks with stones and arrows.

It was once said that the former king at that time, in order to seize the capital taken by Danish pirates, had ordered the bridge to be burned, for it blocked the road. In turn, he was victorious in his battle.

Even now, 1000 years later, this period of time was engraved in people's memories, turning it into a well-known fairy tale.

But unfortunately, now, at the London Bridge, there were six hanged corpses of victims.

The Earl of Fairies, Edgar Ashenbert, held a grim expression as he read the morning newspaper.

As for the London people, they were in great shock. The victims were not identical in any way, distinct in age and upbringing. The only thing they had in common was being on the London bridge, hanging on the rope that was tied to the railings.

The incident was originally reported as a suicide. One of the witnesses believed they saw someone put the rope around their own neck and jump off the bridge. However, there were other different statements.

Some witnesses claimed that standing next to the victim was a figure of a shadow. Not another person, but a being that's almost like a terrifying devil.

“Lord Edgar, the victims do not appear to be English. While Michael Kent is an English name, it is only from his mother's family name, and it appears he was born from a small clan called Ceylon.”

In the study room, a quiet report was given to Edgar by the up-and-coming artist, Paul Ferman.

He was Edgar's companion and fighting ally who's a member of the secret organization “Scarlet Moon”. From the group, he received a report regarding the murder investigation, and so he came to notify Edgar.

“Before the colonization of Ceylon, there was a clan who founded the small country named Hadiya. It appears he is the leader of the surviving people.”

“Hadiya?”

“Yes. But the country seems to no longer exist. The confidant said there were no records of the place...”

“Because the colonies soon went separate ways, the lands were divided, and the natives were eventually driven out by others. However, Paul, that was a name I've heard before.”

Paul's eyes widened in surprise. Edgar placed the folded newspaper on the table and stared at the young boy pouring black tea.

“There was once one pair of young siblings who were sold and taken away from their home. They didn't know where their home was and were forced to travel through several foreign ships, crossing the long sea journey. But they only remembered one thing: that their birthplace, in their native tongue, was called Hadiya.”

Going by the siblings' memories, Edgar had attempted to find the location of Hadiya. However, the only clue was that it was an English colony, and the supposed area was too broad to determine.

As a result, even the approximate region couldn't be determined. But he had never even dreamed to hear its name again, especially in the report about this tragic event.

“Ceylon.”

Has the powerful enemy finally revealed its little tail? However, in order to seize it, there was still not enough information.

“Paul, I would like to know more about it.”

“Yes. However, the guards were well-noted to conceal the information. Not to mention, the newspapers and the English court have yet to comment on the incident as well.”

“Then, get in touch with those people, and tell them my name.”

Edgar took a piece of paper and quickly scribbled some words. Picking up the note, Paul asked with an incredulous expression:

“But Lord Earl, is this incident really associated with Prince?”

“I think the chance of it is rising higher and higher. The siblings I've just mentioned were sold to Prince.”

“Eh? ... So.....”

“Hadiya was Raven and Ermine’s home.”

Raven and Ermine were Edgar’s faithful followers, though it was possible that Ermine betrayed Edgar when she continued to listen to Prince’s orders from his home base.

One of the leaders of these native people, one of its descendants in London at the time, was killed in a bizarre way. What is the meaning of this? Edgar wondered.

On a rare day when the sun came out, the grass and trees took the chance to rise up and flourish, filling the fields with shades of light green.

On the outskirts of London, there sat a Church on a gentle hill. Echoing the blessing sound of bells, a wedding had just been held for a couple. The newlyweds and their surrounding guests were filled with smiles.

In the corner among those guests was Lydia, who was unconsciously putting on a brooding expression.

It was a solemn ceremony with pure white dresses, and frankly, Lydia was looking forward to seeing it. But the thought of marriage made Lydia’s mood very complicated.

How did they know they wished to be married? Did they not even have a little bit of hesitation? Lydia was considering every trivial matter.

She knew the groom for he was one of her father’s students. It was only because of that that she was familiar with the wedding, but that was all.

Anyhow, for Lydia, being proposed to just made things confusing for her. Even though this was someone else's wedding, she unknowingly thought about her own issues with it.

She imagined herself being the one in front of the church as she watched the blissful bride surrounded by fluttering flowers.

If it was another man's words, would I be happy?

Lydia imagined him standing in fluttering white petals, motionless and looking away. But he was not looking at Lydia, nor was he looking at the guests.

At a distance, he was among the servants, looking for someone.

But that was only her imagination. Even so, could he really give Lydia happiness?

"Oh, Father, how did you propose to mother?"

Anyway, she was already sitting next to her father, so she simply asked him.

"At the time, did she not hesitate to agree?"

Feeling embarrassed, Father began scratching his head. It was originally neatly groomed, but now became strangely disheveled.

"Ah, that.... It was a long time ago."

He was completely oblivious to how he dressed, has low interest in women, and was so immersed in his work as a naturalist. As their daughter, Lydia always wondered how he was able to convince her mother to marry him.

Even though she asked many times, he never gave an answer.

She was never able to ask her mother since her mother passed away when she was quite young.

"Oh Lydia, the commemoration pictures are about to begin" her father said, immediately trying to avoid the question.

"I'm not going. I will wait for you at the bench in the shade over there."

Although having to keep posing for photos was already difficult to deal with, her father still nodded and hurriedly went his way in panic.

"Oh, Father, your hair is all messed up....."

She opened her mouth to speak, but then she thought it was fine if she didn't say it. Anyway, he always moved a few times during the photos, so they should turn out blurry. His hair should be fine for that.

There was a paved path that went along the church. So, Lydia went to the bench. As she began to sit down, she was able to see the distant prairie with a herd of flocks scattered across.

Being in any quiet place, there will be noisy fairies from underneath the bushes and the roots of the trees, which Lydia could hear clearly.

Watching the sun and peaceful scenery, Lydia relaxed her breathing.

On her knee, she placed some sugar snacks that were wrapped in lace and gave it to everyone. She took one and secretly placed it at her feet.

If you try to watch them, they won't come. So, she gently closed her eyes. When she opened her eyes again, the sugar snacks vanished like the wind.

Then, she heard the noises of the fairies become cheers of joy. Lydia couldn't help but laugh.

Whenever she was with fairies, she always felt a little happy.

"You look very happy."

Hearing the sudden voice, she immediately raised her head.

Just from the voice, she knew who it was. The owner of the voice she knew came from a young blond man.

He was dressed in an elegant suit, with his arm lightly hanging on a cane. He smiled and walked over to her side.

"I have come to see you, my fairy."

He stopped in front of Lydia and removed his hat with grace. Under spring's sunlight, his golden blond hair swayed softly.

She was momentarily startled by his beauty as he flashed her a charming smile, as if it was only for her, along with gazing at her with eager eyes.

This was Lydia's employer who had, on a whim, forced her to marry him - Edgar Ashenbert.

"Edgar... What are you doing here?"

"Because I believe the wedding is about to end."

"That's not the problem. How did you know I was here?"

"No matter where you are, I know you well enough to guess."

Such a smooth-talker.

"I heard you were going back, so I came to pick you up."

Finally, Lydia sighed. Certainly, it must have been Nico who told him. That unreliable fairy cat will do anything right away if given some delicious food, which has recently been fully bought by Edgar.

“Are there fairies?”

Edgar didn't care when Lydia sighed, and he looked at her watching the grass and said:

“Hello? This..... May I have some sugar snacks?”

Edgar sat down next to her, picked up a small piece of sugar cookie shaped like a rose, and placed it on top of the stone.

“Are they going to come out and take it?”

“They keep looking over here. Fairies are very shy, so you must close your eyes. Okay? In three seconds, open them.”

Lydia, who closed her eyes, counted to three in her heart. Suddenly, she was kissed on the forehead, and she opened her eyes.

“You, what are you doing!”

“You finally closed your eyes, so it was either now or never.”

“You..... You.....!”

“See, your sugar cookies are gone. Fairies sure love to eat them, right?”

After looking at Edgar's innocent smile, Lydia couldn't get angry anymore.



“..... Yes, they look so happy.”

We're not lovers, so how can you do this kind of thing?

Well, he allows himself to do it, but it's too casual. Lydia just couldn't understand.

However, at the same time, Lydia felt happy.

Trying to get in touch with fairies on his own like this, in fact, she still wanted to see that.

Edgar once told her that he could understand everything about her. But what

about her thoughts that she never told anyone? How can he understand them? Whenever he spoke frivolously on a whim, sometimes he really complied with them. Because of that, Lydia never really felt that she could believe him. Even so, she still wanted to try.

He said he would only think of us now, but is that true? (?)

“By the way, Lydia, did you see a man with long, black hair? Do you know who he is?”

He asked in a serious tone.

This man, who was only interested in women, questioned about another man with obvious hostility. Lydia felt as the air became tense. If she thought to hide it, she would no doubt be misunderstood.

So, she answered honestly:

“Do you mean Ulya? He came to London to study in the university about a month ago. He is Father’s student.”

He gave a natural impression of nobility, but his skin was olive brown and he had long dark hair that hung on his back. Wherever he went, he was a very attractive young man. Apparently, he was Indian.

Living in India, he was an orphan before he went through an English adoption. Therefore, he spoke fluent English. When his father returned, he took him to England. With that, Lydia had told Edgar everything she knew.

“What is his full name?”

“I’ve heard it once, but I’ve forgotten. Everyone just called him Ulya. What’s wrong?”

“He’s been watching you.”

Eh?

“Since when did you start watching me? What a disgusting hobby!”

“I hate it. I just arrived a little early and was merely waiting in the carriage and took a look. Since the beginning, when everyone left the church, his eyes were following you.”

“Maybe my hair was strange?”

“Lydia, you are so lovely. Even if a man likes you, that is normal.”

When Edgar solemnly said this, it made her feel shy.

Basically, Edgar was the only man who said that to her.

“He must be somewhere looking at you now.”

“Impossible.”

“Do you want to see?”

Edgar suddenly pulled Lydia to his chest and wrapped his arms around her shoulders.

“You -! What are you doing!”

She struggled in panic but was unable to get out of his grip.

“Hey, stop it!”

She felt anxious and scared at the same time. Even when she wanted to push him away, his hands wouldn’t let go.

She clearly rejected him, but by his touch, she honestly wasn’t at all that upset.

She didn’t know why she was acting so strange, so Lydia wanted to cry.

“Hey, let her go!”

Appearing behind Edgar was Ulya, standing straight.

“How can you force a woman like that?”

“Do you have any right to question me?”

Although Lydia wanted to run away from him, he kept holding her hand, while sending a challenging look at Ulya.

“Right?”

“Lydia is my lover.”

Ulya looked doubtfully at Lydia. In order to cover her watery eyes, she lowered her head.

“Are you really, Miss Carlton?”

“That, that is.....”

“You seemed to be watching her, just across the trees, peeking at our side. What is the meaning of that?”

“I wasn’t..... I was only there to smoke a cigarette.”

He shifted his line of sight, but that small movement did not escape Edgar’s eyes.

He suddenly stood up, grabbed Ulya’s neck, and pulled him to the side.

“You do not smell of cigarette smoke. You’re not very good at lying.”

Seeing Edgar smoothly grasping Ulya by the throat, Lydia was terrified.

“Edgar, stop!”

He let go of Ulya, who staggered and fell to the ground, and then raised his face to glare up at Edgar.

“Mr. Ulya, I’m so sorry! Are you injured?”

She was about to run over to check on him, but Edgar pulled her arm to stop her.

“Lydia, leave him be.”

“You, don’t command me.”

Standing up, Ulya smiled as he heard those words.

“I don’t think you’re lovers. It was only you alone who was pestering her, right?”

Oh, this is bad, Lydia thought, feeling Edgar’s killing intent prick her skin.

“Oh, Father, this way!”

At that moment, the pictures ended for the professor, so Lydia hurriedly called him to come.

Even Edgar wouldn’t use violence in front of Lydia’s father. He withdrew his fists, which made her relax a little.

Ulya, who had also grown a hostile attitude, nodded to the professor as a greeting, and then left.

“Isn’t this Lord Edgar?”

“Hello, Professor. So, you’re going to Cambridge soon. I learnt that there was a research conference being held there.”

Edgar's murderous look had disappeared, and a gracious smile took its place.

Edgar wanted to leave a positive impression on her father, and Lydia understood that. Edgar was particularly interested in Lydia; even her father should have noticed it.

However, because his daughter had been insisting that their relationship was merely between an employer and a fairy doctor, her father had no choice but to believe her.

Her father had always thought that nobles were never truly interested in courting women of lower class.

Thanks to that, if he knew that his daughter was proposed by Edgar, he would surely panic. Lydia was worried that Edgar may speak of sensitive topics, so she anxiously paid close attention to their conversation.

“Why, you are well-informed.”

“I heard that this is the peak of the mineralogy field, a high-leveled meeting. As head of the study of mineralogy, Professor Carlton, of course you will be selected.”

“You're too kind, Earl.”

Her father scratched his head, feeling overwhelmed. However, even if Edgar didn't mention it, Lydia knew about it as her father's assistant, Mr. Langley, had already told her.

“I heard you were going to stay there for a month. You must be worried about your daughter being alone in London.”

“Yes, but Lydia is already used to not being by my side.”

That being said, her father had asked Lydia, if she would like to go to Cambridge. Because of the recent unexplained killings that took place in London, her father was worried about her.

But as a fairy doctor, Lydia still had work to do.

As it so happens, Edgar's enemy, whom he had sworn to take revenge on, was likely to come to England. She didn't know what would happen after, but she knew she didn't want to leave Edgar's side.

In any case, the enemy had someone who was a master at fairy magic, and Edgar's only ally who understood fairies was Lydia.

“In fact, Professor, I am here today because I wished to discuss this matter with you. I hope that Miss Lydia can temporarily stay at my manor. What do you think?”

Eh? Lydia couldn't help but frown.

Her father was shocked. His mouth fell open, and he propped his glasses back up as they slipped.

“Lately, there have been continuous killings in London. Therefore, I am very much worried for Miss Lydia's safety. She herself wanted to gain your permission.”

“I - I didn't say that!”

When have I ever spoken of wanting to live in Edgar's manor?

“Didn't you? You didn't want to leave my side, and because of the incidents and your father not being home, you were scared.”

“I did not want to stay by your side. I only said that because there was work I needed to do, I didn't intend to leave London!”

Then, Lydia remembered when he said had those words to her father once. He used to joke about the idea: what if she lived in the Earl's manor. However, how could she face her father with this kind of thing?

It may just be simple for him to reject Edgar.

“I believe for an unmarried daughter to speak with her father about this, such as living a month outside of home, she would be quite troubled. As an employer, it is my responsibility to take good care of my employees. Professor, what are your thoughts on it?”

He deliberately took her words out of context, just as she expected.

“Your father would have invited you to join him on his trip to Cambridge, but you rejected him for me. For that, I am very grateful. Therefore, when the professor is away, it is my duty to protect you, correct?”

He even knew that her father invited her to Cambridge.

He made it sound as if Lydia made it no secret at all and openly consulted Edgar about it.

It must have been Nico.

She was filled with a strong sense of resentment for her fairy friend.

“Professor, your home also appears to be quite close to one of the victims that were murdered. She was a fine girl, around the same age as Miss Lydia. But she shouldn't have gone out at night, for the next morning, she was murdered. Her body appeared in such a bad posture on the London Bridge. After hearing of it, I was not at ease to find that you were going to be away as Lydia remained home alone.”

Edgar didn't give her a chance to deny and defend herself because then, Edgar followed up shortly after.

By recalling the cases of continuous murders and the degree of gruesome

severity, her father began to feel unsettled and shaken up.

“In that case, Earl, your proposal is based on your identity as an employer?”

“Yes. Because of her sense of duty, Lydia had offered to stay in London. So, you can rest assured that protecting her life is my obligation.”

“My daughter hasn’t yet spoken of marriage. That is, if anything went wrong.....”

“Nothing will happen.”

You’re what’s going to happen.

Edgar had attacked Lydia before. Although at the time, it was because he was drunk, but living under the same roof couldn’t be taken lightly.

“I can take care of myself!”

“Lydia, although you always try to be brave, but don’t force yourself to endure it alone in the future.”

As he elegantly said those words, he gazed at her with gentle eyes.

“Didn’t you say that no matter what happens, you’d be okay as long you’re with me? I just simply really wanted to propose to your father”

“Propose what?”

“No, no Father! In short, I... Living alone is indeed a bit unsettling.”

If Edgar said words, such as marriage, this will certainly affect Father in his important research conference.

You despicable man! In her heart, Lydia was scolding him, but her lips could only say so much.

“I’m going home. Please excuse me.”

“Ah... Alright.”

“Since you trust him, then I won’t stop you from him like before. ”

Her father put his hands on Lydia’s shoulders. He turned around to Edgar and said:

“Earl, please take good care of her.”

“You can rest assured.”

Things went exactly as he wanted. Therefore, Edgar was in a good mood and had a huge smile on his face.

After having dinner with the bride and groom, her father had to prepare to

leave soon for Cambridge. So afterwards, Lydia could only greet Edgar and return to London with him.

She reminded her father to tidy his hair and gave a hug as goodbye. Despairingly, she and Edgar walked together.

Then, Edgar suddenly said, "What do you really want to do?"

As they rode in the carriage, Lydia felt very displeased.

"I didn't get a chance to ask you beforehand."

"Regardless, I'm not going to your manor."

"That's not possible. With permission from the professor, I must bring you there."

Lydia frowned and grimly looked at him. It didn't look like Edgar was teasing her. In fact, it was as though he truly intended to do so.

"Those events may be related to Prince."

The one known as Prince was the one who took everything away from Edgar, who had been the heir of a Duke, since he was a child.

Prince, who had inherited the royal English blood, was seemingly involved with evil fey magic, and it seems that he had once attempted to use that power to trigger a rebellion in England. That was why he wanted Edgar, who also had royal blood flowing in his veins.

However, since escaping Prince and upholding the fairy Earl title of the country, they were now mortal enemies. Edgar had come to realize that, as the mysterious Blue Knight Earl's heir, he shouldered the responsibility to eradicate Prince.

"Prince is the cause for that string of murders?"

"On the surface, it appears unrelated, but it's actually hard to say. The meaning of it may be some sort of magic ritual. Moreover, one of the victims was of a native race similar to Raven. He was from the same foreign country."

Raven was Edgar's entourage. He was a young boy with exotic brown skin. He was a little bit special in that he lacked the emotions of a human being, with a natural murdering intent, due to the presence of a sprite in his body.

While Lydia could see evil fairies, she had never faced one like Raven's. Even so, he gave a unique impression. His presence felt almost non-human.

From the co-existence of fairies in this mysterious country, people were getting killed in London. It brought attention to people and really made Lydia more worried. (It originally said : “It really made people want to care.” ?)

“Moreover, he was a descendant leader of a small clan, which could even be considered royalty. Raven has a living sprite in his body, with his clan belonging to the royal family, so his fairy may also be of royalty? Or perhaps it is part of Prince’s research. It probably has something to do with magic. Anyway, he is interested in Raven’s sprite. Therefore, he is searching for the rest of his surviving royal families. He plans to obtain their fairy magic and secrets, and then kill them after.”

“Or perhaps this all happened by chance.”

“Yes, but I am still a little concerned. Prince is intent in prolonging my torture. First, starting at the place of slavery I escaped from, now looking for the last surviving descendants... The next one to be targeted should be Raven.”

As he knew Prince very well, Edgar’s inexplicable hunch might be right. He turned his face to the window, revealing a hint of a smile. This was a resolute determination to fight. Anyone who saw him would’ve thought he was a leader with no weakness.

Watching his face, Lydia felt a little lonely.

It had to be very painful to try to be brave. I really hope that if no one’s around, he can let himself breathe.

Now, since there was no one else there but Lydia, he clearly didn’t have to be so brave.

“Yes now, you mentioned a young woman earlier, what really happened? She had nothing to do with Prince, right?”

Although it was a small hint, maybe it would allow Edgar to relax and rest assured, so Lydia changed the subject.

“Oh, it was just something I made up.”

... What?

“With the Professor, it ended up quite well, yes?”

“You - you!”

Looking back at him, he suddenly held a strong grip on her hand.

"I am always deceitful, so you can't believe in me. I know you think so. Although I've always wanted to work hard for you to trust me, but it always seems to not go so well."

As usual, he placed her hand to his lips, and then he pressed his warm lips to her skin.

Lydia couldn't help but become flushed, and her whole body went stiff. At the moment, she was filled in self-loathing for feeling this way.

Why is it that he allows himself to do this when they're not even married?

Edgar's little joke needed to be flatly refused. This kind of joke, she couldn't accept. It's too abnormal for her.

He could easily do this with others. At the thought of that, Lydia felt a sharp pain.

I want to disappear.

"You, no matter what time it is, you're always unreasonable. Earlier, it was that trick, and then doing things like that to Ulya....."

"I was not unreasonable. It was in order for him to look away from you at the reception. Also, I just wanted to lightly touch you."

"Don't touch me. Please stop the carriage."

Disguised as a gentleman, he finally moved back and released her hand, as she tried to reject him.

"I can't do that."

"..... Or I, I'll jump."

As if to appease a disobedient child, Edgar smiled and joked:

"I'm not a kidnapper. You don't need to be afraid."

In fact, you are one.

"Then, I will concede with you. When you're at my manor, I will never touch you."

"You really won't touch me?"

"Well, for the time being."

"Then, I'll stay in my room all the time!"

Edgar then showed a distressed look. But it seems he gave up, as he muttered that he understood.

“Lydia, I have made up my mind. Though, I don’t know if you will fall in love with me, but there is one thing I know for sure. That is, from now on, I will never let you escape from me.”

Willful with his unreasonable threat, his face appeared so lonely. So, Lydia felt that she must have been too harsh on him.

“In order to protect you, I will do whatever it takes to have you stay by my side.”

He softly whispered, nearly bumping into her.

Recently, since Edgar had appeared, a few notable figures have also been seen with him. They were his guards.

The need to strengthen his security was insisted by the Scarlet Moon. The leader thought that the Earl’s home was understaffed. Edgar had always believed the Scarlet Moon was a headache, but in this case, they compromised on the matter.

Members of the Scarlet Moon, while on high alert for unexpected enemy attacks, seemed to have secretly assembled.

Even Lydia was required to have a guard with her as well.

Inadvertently looking out the window, she was touring around the building as she was being guarded by two tall young twins. She didn’t feel too different being heavily-guarded compared to before.

The twins were responsible for the Earl’s security work. However, they were introduced to Lydia as sculptors. Their names were Jack and Louis, but she couldn’t tell who was who.

Edgar probably wasn’t so sure as well.

Anyway, he said that since they were the sculptors, he just had to let them repair the roof decor. So, the two men may not have come to tour the building, but to inspect the roof.

Edgar’s attitude was always like that. She really didn’t know where his priorities lied. With this approach, it was to confuse the ally and the enemy.

But with that, it wasn’t possible to guess Edgar’s true thoughts.

At the Earl’s mansion, she spent the whole night in her room, reluctantly lost in these thoughts.

“Oh, you live here now.”

Nico!

The gray, hairy fairy cat didn't know where to go back to play, so he quickly and cleverly climbed through the window.

Lydia had plenty of things to tell Nico, but she was feeling a little bit impatient because he hadn't show up at all the night before. This morning, he finally appeared.

He did not face Lydia's direction, but he gracefully walked slowly in her room with two feet. With his eyes on the leather chair, he gently jumped to confirm the feeling of the seat and sat down.

“Well, it's quite high. For tonight, I will use this as my bed.”

Lydia walked to Nico who was feeling fairly good. She appeared displeased, and with her hands on her hips, she looked down at him.

“Nico, you've been really talkative with Edgar, haven't you?”

“Ah, isn't it fine though? Not only is the lady safe and sound at the manor, the meals are delicious, and even the bed is quite comfortable.”

“You must feel very comfortable, but I find it hard to accept, oh, I don't feel comfortable at all.”

“Ah but, my lady, last night you slept very well.”

Another voice emerged. A hobgoblin with a cocked hat sat in the cupboard above.

“That was because... I had just attended a wedding full of guests, so I was a little bit tired.”

“Even so, my lady has finally begun to live with the Earl in his home... Oh, that is wonderful.”

Coblynau, with deep emotion, touched his knotted beard as he nodded his head.

“In this case, you deserve to be the Blue Knight Earl's wife.”

“None of that is true! I am only staying here as a guest.”

Impatient, she loudly refuted. Coblynau didn't know what to do, so he nonchalantly smoked a pipe.

He was a fairy that wanted to bring Edgar and Lydia together.

Known as the mine goblin of precious gems, for generations they managed to hide the magic of the moonstone. This was all because the first Blue Knight Earl's wife, Diana's daughter (?), kept the gem close to her.

Now that moonstone was used as Edgar's engagement ring, which was worn on Lydia's finger, it was the fairies' great masterpiece.

Completely oblivious to Lydia's troubled expression, Coblynau began calling the Moonstone's name as if it was his own child:

"Bow, let me worry about it. Your holder would soon become his wife. Anyway, it was finally decided that they start their early life living under the same roof."

"Either way, stop it, you're making me feel embarrassed!"

Lydia was furious, but the goblin continued. He leisurely smoked, and Nico yawned in the chair.

"Hey, I say, Kelpie hasn't appeared in a while."

In other words, they haven't seen Kelpie. But he was a capricious water horse. He had strong magic and was a man-eating monster. It was difficult to imagine encountering something that dangerous.

Despite being a fierce fairy, Lydia had a good impression of him, even though he was a strange water horse. They didn't have any sort of relationship, so even if he hadn't appeared, Lydia wasn't bothered.

"To be honest, it is good that the water horse is gone. That way, he cannot interrupt my lady's wedding..."

As Coblynau spoke, he looked anxiously out the window. Normally, after they spoke badly of him, there was an inevitable roar coming from the emerging dark water horse.

"Yes, I also don't care enough to worry about that guy. He's a demon."

"You mean Kelpie? Where is he?"

"How can I possibly know where that water horse may be. Well, anyway, after dinner I may want to go for a walk?"

"Nico, did you eat breakfast already?"

"I was hungry, so I ate first."

Even though this was clearly someone else's home, this cat had no manners.

"Good bye, Lydia. If that earl does anything to you, you can call me for help."

“If I called, would you actually come?”

Although he was a long childhood friend, every time Lydia faced a crisis, did he not always run away?

“But I’ll hear it.”

Nico said that and immediately disappeared. At the same moment, there came a knocking at the door. The one calling her to breakfast was Ermine.

“Breakfast is ready. Please head to the dining hall.”

Her combed hair reached her shoulders. Wearing a black-tie, dressed in a black coat and men’s clothing, she should be Edgar’s most cherished woman.

He loved to play around, but because he knew and understood Ermine’s feelings, he could never touch her that way. Lydia could see just how important Ermine was to Edgar by his attention to this.

They have been supporting each other through hard times, fighting alongside each other. Though Lydia couldn’t understand, she knew they had a strong, irreplaceable bond.

However, Lydia’s mood could not help but grow heavy at the thought of Ermine's possible betrayal to Edgar. Lydia then thought that maybe it was for his own sake.

In order to help Edgar become the Earl, she, as a fairy doctor, has been staying by his side.

During his plan to escape, for Edgar was a special person to Ermine, she didn’t expect her wish was Lydia on the rest. (?)

“That... Is Edgar also in the dining hall?”

Even though she wore plain and simple men’s clothing, it couldn’t mask her beauty and charm, which was always so compelling.

“Yes.”

Whenever the both of them were together, anyone could feel that they were a well-matched couple.

“Do you mind if I request to have my meals here?”

Thinking of these things, Lydia was starting to feel more and more depressed.

Edgar had recently become more assertive than before. However, on Lydia’s side, she didn’t outright reject him like she normally did, instead she tried

avoiding him.

With a puzzled expression, Ermine muttered an “understood”, and then left.

After a while, Raven appeared at her door, and Lydia breathed a sigh of relief.
“Miss Lydia, please head to the dining hall.”

He almost sounded frustrated for he spoke in a curt tone, but he had a blank face. Perhaps this was a sincere plea from him.

“Ah..... That, however, Raven...”

“Edgar is not drunk and has not taken any pills now. It is no longer dangerous to be near him.”

That isn’t the problem.

Plus, he was still dangerous, even when he was sober.

Even so, Raven persisted. Perhaps he felt responsible for Lydia gradually avoiding Edgar, as he had led Lydia to Edgar’s room when he was drunk.

“You really are thinking of your master. Isn’t Edgar going to order you to take me there anyway?”

“No. Lord Edgar said that if Miss Lydia chooses to have her breakfast in her room, he will join her here. I believe that is more dangerous, is it not?”

Lydia looked around the room.

Nothing noteworthy but a room meant to be relaxed in. Though it was said to be Lydia’s private room, it had a calming atmosphere meant for amiable friends to be able to stay together here.

On the other hand, the dining room was a public room meant for social gatherings. Even in their own homes, nobles tended to distinguish between the public and private rooms. Taking that into account, if Edgar came here, it would pose a problem.

Resigning to her fate, Lydia finally took heavy footsteps toward the dining hall.

When she entered the room, Edgar was already sitting at the table. To welcome her, he immediately stood up and happily smiled at her.

“Did you sleep well last night?”

“Ah, yes I did.”

“If you can feel as if it’s your own home and just relax a little here, then I will be very happy.”

If she did as he said, that would be bad.

Lydia was immediately tense, but Edgar unceremoniously lightly held a lock of her hair and kissed it.

“Your room maid wasn’t unskillful, was she? All of you, your caramel-coloured hair and mysterious golden-green eyes, are my treasure, so it should be treated with extra care. I’ve talked to the maids beforehand, after all. ”

“Did you really say such embarrassing things?”

“Oh, I didn’t feel embarrassed to say them.”

But I would feel embarrassed!

“Even so, you are welcomed to stay here. If there is anything you want, you can request it.”

Then, in that case, I want this man to stop talking.

Lydia showed a displeased face until she noticed that there was a stranger, a middle-aged man, in the room. She panicked and hurriedly replaced her expression with a smile and moved away from Edgar.

“Edgar... is there not a guest here?”

“Oh, I was just about to introduce you.”

To be so close in front of others, Lydia felt ashamed, though Edgar did not mind.

“This is Gordon, the London police officer.”

With a neat mustache and groomed hair, he looked a bit nervous. It appears that he had been standing at the table from the very beginning. When he met Lydia’s eyes, he officially gave a formal bow.

“He came early in the morning to discuss the incident at the London Bridge.”

Edgar held Lydia’s hand and brought her to the table. Raven pulled out her chair for her, and once Lydia was seated, Gordon, the police officer, also sat down.

Perhaps because she was the guest of a noble, he assumed that she was a noble as well.

He also didn’t show any confusion towards Edgar’s overly sweet manners. Maybe Edgar had casually mentioned that she was his fiancée a while ago.

However, Lydia had no chance to correct him. The officer shifted his attention away from her. He must not care about what kind of guests the Earl had. At such a thought, her feeling of shame slightly eased a bit.

Lydia then began to properly pay attention to them and guessed the police officer's intentions.

One of Raven's people was killed, so maybe that was why he's here.

"Since you rarely come, officer, would you like to join us for breakfast?"

Edgar was still in a good mood, so he didn't feel anything wrong with the police officer's visit.

"No, I must go soon. Please don't worry about hospitality."

"All right, then please begin asking."

As the words spilled out, Raven opened up the napkin and began serving their breakfast.

Thanks to the officer's sudden visit, she was not alone with Edgar. As she settled down, she began to prepare her cup of tea with milk and plenty of sugar.

"The case of the London Bridge, in fact, held very few clues. Fairies aside, there are only two strong evidence we found."

Then, Officer Gordon calmly expressed their thoughts.

"One clue was a testimony that there was a suspicious man who kept looking down at the hung victim. It was said that once he was called out, he hurriedly fled. Witnesses have heard regarding this same case, that he was a suspected prisoner who was half-excited and outraged. He was even slightly amused as we gave chase. Unfortunately, in the end, he escaped."

"Did you know the person's appearance and body shape?"

"It was much too dark to see him clearly. However, there were those who thought that it was a woman in men's clothing."

Lydia, who was surprised, nearly spilled her tea. On the contrary, Edgar remained calm and composed.

"Because there was a struggle during the encounter, did you know if that was a woman?"

"It was. She was afraid of being seen, so she disguised herself as a man. In this case, whether she is the prisoner or involved with the prisoner, this case involves a woman."

Even if that was the case, it should still be abnormal for a girl to dress as a man.

Lydia, in order to relieve her doubts of Ermine, took a deep breath and secretly took a glance at Raven.

He placed hot food in front of her, indifferent to the current conversation.

“What then? What was the second clue?”

What happened? Edgar seemed to be asking the same thing. Nonetheless, Lydia, who was worried about the slip of tongue, didn’t say anything. So, with her knife, she cut the meat and eggs in smaller portions and welcomed them into her mouth.

“A few days ago, the latest victim was similar in that he had grass-green remnants in his mouth.”

“It must’ve been Michael who came from Ceylon.”

“His wife had said that the green stone was originally the size of an almond with symbols engraved on the surface. Mr. Kent always cherished it and kept it with him at all times. Therefore, we were investigating it. After inspecting the remnants that were found, it turns out that it was a mineral called a diopside (Fai stone?)”

“I have never heard of this mineral.”

“It was rarely used as a gem in the market because it is difficult to process, and it is very fragile.”

“Why were they in his mouth?”

“Maybe in order for it not to be stolen, he attempted to swallow it.”

“But they were rough criminals for they snatched it away, and they left bits and pieces of the stone behind.”

“Yes.”

“So, the stone must be with the prisoner now?”

“I believe so.”

Then suddenly, a loud clashing of tableware was heard, as Raven put down the jam jar with the glass beside it.

Edgar immediately turned his attention to Raven, who whispered his apologies.

“Do the rest of the police officers know so much of this?”

Edgar returned his attention to the police officer. Even though Raven rarely made mistakes, Lydia still felt it was better not to focus on him anyway.

"I really don't understand. Clearly there was no reason to hide the information, but the newspapers received a mandatory order to keep it concealed."

"This is for the sake of your reputation. Do you wish to be under suspicion?"

"I suppose so."

The bearded officer sighed and stood up.

Then, Edgar called for his butler, Tompkins. He immediately appeared, as though he had been waiting outside the door for the whole time.

"Then, officer, do you not want to continue investigating? Don't you have to return to it?"

Lydia felt that it was strange, so she had to ask.

"The investigation? I don't plan to since it is not my field of work."

Tompkins took out an envelope from the desk and placed it in front of the officer. The police officer picked it up and shoved it in his breast pocket. Staring at the whole exchange, Lydia was completely confused.

"Well, Lord, I'll take my leave now."

"Work hard, and inform me if anything happens, please."

After she watched the officer leave, she looked at Edgar. Lydia stared as he casually ate, until she finally understood what had just happened.

"Edgar! You just bribed the officer!"

Edgar turned to Lydia, putting down his knife and fork, and with an uncharacteristically mild tone, he said:

"Lydia, the things that I really desire cannot be obtained using money, no matter how much, like the things I've lost... That's why, I would never be stingy with my money. This wealth of mine was accumulated for this purpose, after all."

"But... but you just made an officer do something bad."

"Bad ...? Indeed, it was a breach of discipline, but was the officer actually hurt from it? This incident was their responsibility."

"I understand your intentions. Although you may do whatever it takes to retrieve information, but whether or not there was physical harm, it is still bad."

Lydia flatly said. With an unexpected nod, Edgar frankly said "Yes."

"I'm not going to blame you. Just"

She couldn't seem to express herself well.

"Perhaps my sins are one of the reasons why you avoid me, but it is also my strength. In order to protect those I value, I cannot give it up."

Edgar had a ruthless side in order to come this far. He couldn't afford to lower his guard even now. While this was nearly a crime, if he was a little hesitant, it could mean the loss of Raven and Ermine's life.

"I'm different from you, and I feel different. But the reason that I'm attracted to you is because of what you have. So, why don't you feel the same way?"

If it was only because of his sins, lies, callousness and contempt for him, she would have already left him.

But she couldn't despise him. He, who with a detached smile, had to fight a battle that caused him pain and sorrow.

If it was this, was she only there with him to sympathize?

If it was only sympathy, she wouldn't have helped him all the time, coping through his entire crisis.

As she thought, she was so upset that she couldn't say anything.

"Don't answer. I believe that one day you would be able to answer all of my questions."

Suddenly, Edgar stopped and shifted his attention to Raven, who had finished working and was preparing to leave.

"Raven, did you hear the words that were spoken earlier?"

"Yes."

"Do you have any thoughts about it?"

It was as if Edgar had deliberately greeted the officer when Raven came in to serve, in order for Raven to be able to hear their conversation.

"..... No."

Edgar stopped for a while. After some thought, he said:

"The person who was murdered was the leader you were originally supposed to serve."

"I have never seen that man before."

"It is your clan's lineage, which hosted the sprites. Do you not feel anything?"

"My only master is Lord Edgar. If there's anything, I would tell you. Please

believe me.”

Although he looked as calm as ever, barely showing emotion, Raven seemed to be a little angry.

“Oh, I have no doubts in you.”

When Edgar spoke, he seemed relieved.

“What do you think, Lydia?”

Edgar asked her as he watched Raven leave the hall.

“What do I think? About what?”

“About that thing he's hiding.”

“Eh? He is? But just now, he just said that his only master is you.”

“That is true, but he only said that because he is trying to hide something.”

“I can't believe it.”

To Raven, Edgar's command was the same as the voice of God. If he knew anything, he wouldn't hide it from him.

“Well, I don't believe it is a bad thing. Above me, his master should be himself.”

Edgar finished his breakfast and stood up.

“But I cannot leave him alone yet. Raven is still unable to bear on his own.”

Chapter 2 - The One in Your Heart

Lydia and Edgar walked together to the back of the manor's kitchen through the servants' special private stairwell.

Within the dimly-lit corridor, there was a pile of unwanted furniture and tools in a small room not too far away. Next to that messy pile of debris, one could see a row of irregularly-arranged doors.

In the corner of the servants' private rooms, it was confirmed that Raven had disappeared into one of those rooms. Feeling as though his premonition came true, Edgar let out a sigh.

"That was Ermine's room."

At this time, the servants were busy, so there were no other people around.

Raven should have known that Ermine was not here. In that case, although they were siblings, why did he want to go inside her room, knowing that she wasn't there?

"Come on."

Edgar approached the door of the room which Raven had entered.

In this case, he did not listen in on the room but suddenly opened the door. For if he was to try to spy, Raven would have noticed anyway.

Standing by the small desk in the room, Raven quickly whipped his head around to the door. Lydia couldn't tell from his poker face whether his heart wavered or not.

Even so, he stayed in that position, as motionless as a statue.

"Raven, did you forget to tell me something a moment ago?"

Edgar said in a dignified manner as he walked in front of him.

Raven did not move. Was he reluctant to answer this question?

Suddenly, Edgar swiftly reached out his hand to tightly grab his arm.

It seemed so thin, as if it was a child's arm that could instantly break just from bending it, yet it was one that could break a person's neck in a heartbeat, but it was lifted by Edgar quite effortlessly.

“This isn't something you can solve on your own. I have already investigated much of this.”

It was as though Raven felt saved by hearing those words, all the tension had left his body, and his head drooped.

“..... My apologies.”

Raven handed the small wooden box he had been holding to Edgar.

Edgar, who accepted it, opened the lid and saw the dark-green stone that rested inside.

Although the color was dark and somewhat transparent, there were something like random scratch marks on the surface of it. All in all, it appeared as if it was a worthless piece of broken glass.

“When did you find it in this room?”

“Three days ago.”

“Was that the day of Mr. Kent’s death?”

“At around midnight, the windows of this room were still open. Because the lights were not on, I was a little concerned and I went to look inside. I found my sister in this room, in utter darkness, looking at the contents of this box worriedly.”



Ermine was snapped out of her reverie by Raven, who had approached her while holding a lamp. Panicked, she quickly closed the box before shoving it into the desk drawer, as though fearing that Raven had seen her gazing at it. Raven only saw something like a green jade in the box and assumed that it was a decoration. It seemed that other men would often give Ermine such things. Regardless, whether it was a gift she received, or if it was something she was forced to accept, it must be difficult for her to speak to Raven about such things. So, it was normal for her to choose to hide them from him.

However, after hearing the words of the police officer, he came into the room to confirm, just in case.

Lydia took the stone that Edgar handed over to her.

It was just as the police officer described. The scratches on the surface the stone looked like they were caused by a knife.

Once the scratches was revealed in the air within the light's radiance, the stone revealed a deep, dark green color, just like the bottom of a lake.

Looking a little closer, Lydia noticed that the scratches formed symbols on the surface of the stone. Exactly as the police officer said, there were certain marks on it.

This symbol consists of straight lines. I feel like I have seen this before, Lydia thought.

“Lord Edgar, Ermine also serves under Prince, is that right?”

“Raven, this matter is for me to judge. You only need to behave the same as before.”

“However, when Ermine had returned as a selkie, I requested for her to be in your care. I guaranteed to supervise her properly.”

Raven knelt down on one knee.

“This is my responsibility. Lord Edgar, please allow me to settle this matter.”

“That is not your job.”

“No, at the time, I give you my word. If my elder sister betrays you again, I will kill her myself.”

Lydia could only look anxiously at them. But, suddenly, she felt someone's presence behind her. Just as she was about to turn her head to look back, her arm was firmly caught.

“..... Ermine.”

Calm, brown eyes stared down at her. Although, as usual, there was no hostility in her expression. However, her firm grip on Lydia's arm was actually very strong.

After retrieving the green stone from Lydia's hands, she slightly relaxed her grip but didn't let go, as she watched Edgar and Raven.

“Lord Edgar, this was not Raven's responsibility. It was all my fault.”

“You are not going to justify it?”

“It's almost time, anyway.”

“Last time, in the small town of Wallcave where the dragon resided... Was it you who stole the red fluorite Freya?”

“Ah, so I was found out?”

“Was it for Prince? What does he intend to do with it?”

He asked as he walked near Ermine.

“Someday, you'll know.”

From that response, Edgar didn't believe he would receive an answer. He then approached Ermine, who still had Lydia in a strong grip, and whispered:

“Let go of Lydia.”

“Although I wish to do that, right now, I need to protect myself.”

Ermine pressed a knife against Lydia's back. Seeing that, Raven released his sharp killing intent, and slowly reached for his weapon hidden on his waist.

“Your selkie's coat is in my hands. Even if you run away to Prince, I own your life.”

“It doesn't matter. For me, as long as there is time for me to escape with the stone, that is enough.”

“Then, go. As long as you don't hurt Lydia.”

In fact, Ermine didn't wish to hurt Lydia.

However, she still stood her ground, and her penknife remained pressed against Lydia's back.

At this point, Raven suddenly acted. As it looked like he was going to pounce towards Lydia, Edgar pushed her away from Ermine, and Lydia fell to the floor.

Meanwhile, Edgar quickly pulled Ermine down, and Raven's dagger stabbed the air, missing its target.

Despite that, with lightning speed, Raven launched another attack towards Ermine again.

However, taking advantage of the little gap between them, Ermine jumped out the window.

As he was about to rush out the window to catch up, Raven was stopped by

Edgar.

“Don’t chase her. I’ve let her go.”

“Letting her go will only benefit Prince.”

“This is an order, Raven.”

Hearing those words, Raven lost his will to fight and relaxed his shoulders.

“Lydia, are you alright?”

When she was about to reach for Edgar’s outstretched hand, Lydia stopped.

They agreed beforehand that they wouldn’t touch. Although this was a small thing, it may give Edgar an opening to breach the agreement in the future.

Therefore, she stood up on her own. Seeing that, Edgar became disheartened and shrugged his shoulders.

“I’m sorry. I was trying to get you away from Ermine’s knife, but I did it too roughly.”

“I’m fine.”

Lydia, while fixing her skirt, thought: Edgar also intended to protect Ermine.

Before Raven became murderous, Edgar protected her in order to let her go.

Even if she betrayed him, he would still protect her.

“Lord Edgar, my top priority is to protect my master from danger. Therefore, I do not understand.”

She was Raven’s only family member. Because of this, he was able to trust her again after her betrayal. However, she had betrayed them yet again. Therefore, though it was rare, Raven obstinately stood his ground. Even so, Edgar was also quite persistent.

“Only I can kill her. That was what she intended. After all, she had chosen to betray me, who still held her selkie coat, which is equivalent to her life.

”

Certainly, in Edgar’s heart, Ermine was better than anyone else.....

Lydia quietly left the room.

Arriving at her own study room, she became wholly absorbed in her thoughts of the symbols that were carved into the stone that she saw a while ago. She began writing them down, working hard to erase the unwanted thoughts that plagued her mind.



It was a recurring dream that used to haunt Edgar. He had clearly escaped from Prince; but when he opened his eyes, he was yet again trapped in the prison-like building in his dream. It was a luxurious room, no different from the mansion he, the son of a Duke, used to live in. He was surrounded by heavy oak furniture, but behind the silk curtains, all the windows had iron bars embedded into them. Looking out the window, he could see nothing but towering stone walls. Sounds akin to wailing and moaning, that came from somewhere within the building, would always be heard. Prince himself only appeared at night. He knew that in dim lighting, it made him appear more intimidating, creating more fear among other people. Just like this, Prince used all kinds of means to torture Edgar's mind. One of the worst tactics was to give him a small sliver of hope, before utterly crushing it. Cats that had sneaked in from the gaps between the iron bars of his window, would lose their head in three days. There was one time when one of the servants, who had been the first to serve Edgar, had merely spoke with him a few times. However, it was a violation of his orders, so his tongue was ordered to be cut off. Almost all of the people around Edgar were those who were loyal to Prince alone. Sometimes, ordinary people were mixed in, but Prince must have done that intentionally to aggravate Edgar. Because of this, no one wanted to approach him again. Ermine was similarly treated by Prince. During her time as a slave, whenever she found a true companion, she was dealt with a serious blow. The feelings that had grown between them was dirtied in the end; but, the bond that had been built between them in their thirst for freedom had never changed. Perhaps she was trying to save her brother. Because even while she still couldn't forget those mortifying experiences, she still chose to stay close to Edgar. He didn't want to let her feel regret for her choice.

With this in mind, Edgar had carefully drawn up a thorough, discrete plan to escape.

It didn't matter that he used Prince's tactics, for it was a tool to allow him to gather comrades in secret.

That was how he was able to return to England, obtaining the title of a noble and a stable life.

And yet, he continued to have this dream.

To resist and reject these feelings of sorrow and emptiness... These were all thoroughly educated in the minds of the victims by themselves.

If there was nothing left to live for, they wouldn't have any expectations, and they wouldn't have to feel pain ever again. The struggle to live was day-by-day, but as long as they could breathe, that was enough.

'If one day, this world is left with only despair, you'll be unexpectedly happy.'

Prince, who appeared in the dim light, told him so.

'To take everything away from you and give you sweet, sweet despair...'

“What’s wrong, Earl, you look unhappy.”

Across the balcony of the atrium, he found a pessimistic gray-haired cat lying casually on the wicker chair, basking in the sunlight.

This guest was not welcomed. Edgar approached the chair, and picking Nico up, he threw him aside.

“Hey, what are you doing!”

“This is my seat.”

Edgar then sat in the chair and opened a letter he had just received.

“ ‘With regards to the figure in the investigation, there is nothing to report yet’?”

Hiring detectives was nothing but a waste. While he requested a report every two days regarding Prince's immigration or his location in England, there were no news whatsoever.

He sighed and threw the letter away.

As he talked endlessly, the letter fell near Edgar's foot, in front of Nico's face.

Then, Edgar stepped on him. Immediately, Nico struggled to break loose and in turn, kicked Edgar's foot in anger.

At that moment, Edgar suddenly reached out and grabbed Nico again.

“Hey, I was just joking. I didn’t kick you, I just carelessly ran into you. Hey, don’t be angry.”

He panicked, as Edgar’s nose moved closer to his face, which only made Nico more anxious.

“Earl, you're insane. I’m not Lydia! I’m not a girl!”

“How can I possibly mistaken this long-haired thing for Lydia? However, you and Lydia do have the same scent.”

That scent of Chamomile, was it because he was always beside Lydia? It was so enviable to Edgar that it became irritating.

Then, Edgar made a knowing smile. In a panic of being caught, Nico was stiff when Edgar firmly clung to him.

“Meow – stop!”

“Lydia said that during her period of staying here, I mustn’t touch her.”

“So, don't use me as her replacement-!”

“Her study room is always locked, and she's always busy.”

“She hates you!”

“I don’t think so. But then, she didn’t accept the proposal either. Why is that?”

“Because you're a big cheater!”

“However, right now, Lydia’s my only ray of light.”

Ever since he'd met Lydia, he had never dreamt of his past.

When he was around her, he felt hopeful. Therefore, he made the resolve that he cannot lose her no matter what, that he must protect her.

He ended his relationships with the other women and was no longer lost.

Even so, he felt restless again.

To dream of the past again...

It’s probably my own fear, he thought.

If Edgar had an irreplaceable treasure, his weakness would be tightly grasped by Prince.

“You calling out another woman’s name during a critical time is really not convincing!” Nico continued.

Lost in his thoughts, as Edgar was thinking, he relaxed his hand, in which Nico

quickly and skillfully took the chance to escape.

Standing in a place out of reach, Nico angrily raised his fist on his side and hurriedly fixed his crooked bow tie.

“Is Lydia still worried about that?”

“Well, of course!”

Edgar could only sigh. Because he had no memory of it, there was no excuse for it.

Though he could guess what had happened.

However, at the time, he very much wanted Lydia. Also, in front of other women before, he certainly had called out Lydia’s name instead.

I want to hold her, feel her warmth.

He then tried to think back again. If he took into account of other things, the only possibility was.....

“..... No.”

“What's wrong?”

Even if he could express it in words, he didn’t want to say it.

He couldn’t control his feelings and pursued Lydia. But at the time, struggling to face with Ermine’s wrongdoings, Edgar was probably feeling guilt in having to fight against her.

“Lord Edgar, is it convenient to speak with you now?”

With an honest face, a butler walked into the balcony. After he noticed him, Edgar recovered his usual face.

“What's the matter, Tomkins?”

“Sometimes, women can behave very unreasonably.”

“..... Well, so?”

“That is why, at a time like this, you must remain tolerant. That is precisely the caliber which makes a gentleman.”

“Then, what do you wish to say?”

As if he had made a difficult decision, Tomkins sighed before saying:

“Miss Lydia is gone.”

Edgar slammed the table with his palms as he stood up.



Lydia, who had returned home alone, went to her bookshelf and retrieved her mother's notebook, swiftly flipping through the pages.

"Here."

As she had remembered seeing some clues regarding the symbols written in the notebook at home, she hurriedly went back to retrieve it.

She didn't tell anyone because if she did, someone would have to accompany her. In the worst case, that person would've been Edgar.

Since she had intended to return immediately, she hadn't wanted anyone to come with her.

There was also another thing that she wanted to do on her own.

She took the notebook and left the house. After that, she took a carriage at the end on the street and headed to the shores of the Thames River.

She got off when they had reached Westminster Bridge. As she walked down the path beside the rustling willows that ran along the river bank, she removed a small pendant from her collar.

It was the aquamarine stone her mother left for her, and also a symbol of mutual friendship between the generations of her family and the selkies.

Although Lydia didn't fully understand the power within this stone called the selkie's heart, it should be able to give her the power to call upon the selkies.

Reborn as a Selkie, Ermine's selkie spirit was still unconscious. Even so, as long as it's a fairy, the magic that is invisible to the eyes could still be sensed.

"Ermine, I need to speak with you. Please respond to the selkie's heart, the holder of friendship."

The selkie's home, the sea, was linked to the river. The breeze that blew into central London should be able to convey Lydia's voice.

She stood there and decided to wait as long as it took.

Suddenly, she could smell the faint scent of fresh water. It didn't come from the muddy, polluted river; it was a pure scent of the cold, northern sea breeze.

Meanwhile, Lydia found that, on the other side of the tree branches, something flickered. She then stopped at the sight of a figure.

"Ermine"

Lydia wanted to run up in front of her, but Ermine stopped her. Her shoulder-length hair fluttered in the wind. And, as if refusing, she shook her head.

“You should not get close to a traitor.”

“You would not hurt me.”

“Being too trusting is very dangerous. However, be that as it may, what is the reason you called for me?”

Certainly not to gossip.

Ermine was about to leave, so then Lydia wasted no time to ask her:

“Why did you want to betray Edgar? He is important to you, isn’t he?”

Ermine did not answer.

“Is there a reason why you’re forced to not answer?”

“I do not wish to say anything. If there isn't anything else, I shall take my leave.”

“Wait! Edgar values you as most important. After the battle with Prince, both of you will be able to forget the past and live happily together. It's true you are a fairy now, but there have been selkies that have married humans.....”

“Lord Edgar’s marriage proposal is to you.”

“I do not understand Edgar at all, but if I’m a hindrance to you, I’m truly very sorry.”

“Are you saying, that for my sake, you refused his proposal? However, that is your own problem.”

She saw right through Lydia, who felt extremely shameful.

However, Edgar may have only cared for Ermine. After such a thought, Lydia was afraid of being attracted to Edgar herself.

But if she were to allow herself to accept that, and if Ermine and Edgar were unable to become happy, then that would have been much sadder. He had considered Lydia as his fiancée, and Lydia had eventually stopped rejecting that idea.

She didn’t know what to do, so that was why she planned to go to Ermine to confirm her feelings. If those two truly loved each other then, as long as she could clear up this matter, Lydia thought she could continue rejecting Edgar, just as she had before.

“Miss Lydia, Lord Edgar is the son of the Duke. Starting from a young age,

there were many people who taught him how to choose a suitable partner. Isn't it impossible for him to fall in love with a woman of a lower class?"

Ermine's tone became gentler than before, perhaps it was because she felt that Lydia looked very pitiful at the moment.

"But... but, for me... He must have had relationships with all kinds of women, right?"

"The exchanges between nobles are free, but marriage is another matter. I know excellent noblemen who have expressed affection for good-willed women in the lower class. However, that was only the love of a master towards his subjects - nothing more, nothing less."

So she's saying that Edgar's feelings towards Ermine was also that kind of love?

Is it really only feelings of affection between a master and a servant?

Lydia believed that class couldn't limit a person's true feelings. In fact, even though Ermine was aware of their different statuses, she still continued to love Edgar.

"You are very beautiful. Edgar isn't someone who would maintain a long-term friendship with a woman. Therefore, he treats you in a very special way. He may have suppressed his feelings, but I don't think he's not in love with you."

Ermine narrowed her eyes, as if she was looking out at a distance.

"Even if such things had happened in the past, there is nothing now. Although I have always been thinking of him, I have come to an understanding now. I should be grateful to him for keeping his distance from me. By being together, we will ruin each other. Even though I knew it would be like that, I couldn't do anything against it, and he refused to accept me."

"But, Edgar, only for you..."

"It is not like that."

Her strong resolution left Lydia puzzled.

"In the end, when the one who needed protection was me, Lord Edgar had always remained calm. If that was true love for me, then I would have understood, because those feelings are something that you cannot suppress, no matter what."

Lydia had never seriously fallen in love before, be it for Edgar or for anyone

else, so she couldn't truly understand Ermine's feelings.

"So why did you leave Edgar? Was it because if you were together, you will destroy each other? I don't understand such a thing. You should also be able to save each other, right?"

She probably thought that Lydia was being a meddlesome girl at this point. Or, she might be feeling irritated, having to be interrogated by Lydia, who held Edgar's heart.

"My apologies. What I have said has troubled you. However, even I understand the one whom Lord Edgar hopes to stay by his side the most, is you."

Lydia, who was gazing at Ermine, suddenly dropped her gaze to look at her hands.

She felt the wind blow the sea breeze against them again. Ermine's soul was connected to the motions of the sea, and feeling the sea breathing into her body, she must have realized that she wasn't human anymore, but a selkie.

"By Prince's order, I was assigned to be Edgar's lover. Edgar understood everything, and yet he didn't touch me. Instead, he treated me as an ordinary girl. After Prince learned of that, he violated me in front of Lord Edgar."

Her tone was blank, and initially, Lydia didn't understand. As Lydia was deep in her thoughts, Ermine flatly continued.

"Even though I couldn't endure being around Lord Edgar, I couldn't suppress my feelings for him. I wanted to be held by him. But if he did that, perhaps I would have recalled my memories of suffering and humiliation brought by Prince, and I would have come to hate the ones I cherished the most. Lord Edgar felt that, in practice, he was similar to Prince based on how I behaved around him. Therefore, he didn't touch me. Though, I do understand now. Until the moment when I lost my life as a human, I still hoped to continue having these feelings toward him."

Shivering, it finally dawned on Lydia what Ermine was saying. However, Ermine kept an unexpectedly calm expression.

"Now that I am no longer human, all these emotions are gradually fading. When I found out Lord Edgar had grown attracted to you, I was neither surprised nor jealous. I suppose you could say, at that point, I was no longer human."

“..... Even so, do you really have to go?”

The peaceful life of being Edgar's entourage, is it that painful?

“Even as a selkie, these feelings won't disappear..... Therefore, we will never meet again.”

Then, what are her true feelings? Does she really intend to be Edgar's enemy?

Ermine, who didn't intend to continue with the conversation, slowly turned her back to Lydia.

Still shaken, Lydia noticed her cheeks were wet. She wiped away her tears with her hands.

To hear about such cruel matters, Lydia was starting to feel afraid. For Lydia, it was frightening to try and imagine all the hardships Edgar had been faced with, and there were still a lot of things that Lydia found difficult to imagine.

His life and Ermine's, she could never understand it all. When she thought those words, she could only feel pained and lonely.

As if she suddenly remembered, Ermine stated:

“Miss Lydia, if you still have a bond with the selkies, I have a favor to ask. Please do not let Raven touch the diopside.”

That was the stone that was still in Ermine's hands. However, she was still worried about it being touched.

“I had accidentally obtained one stone of the Diopside. Thankfully, Raven didn't touch it. However, there will be other similar stones and, if Raven were to touch them, his sprite's power would strengthen and it may cause him to no longer obey Lord Edgar. So, please be careful.”

As she hurriedly said those words, she then blended into the trees and disappeared to the banks of the river.



As she returned to the Earl's manor, Tomkins immediately appeared and took her to the room Edgar was in.

“You've come back, Lydia.”

Edgar said, as he sat in his armchair in front of his desk, smiling. However, it was clear that he was not happy.

Lydia stiffly stood in the doorway, glancing nervously at the butler, who secretly

urged her to get in the room. As she did so, she recalled the seemingly 'useful' advice he had given her earlier on.

“Well, Miss Lydia, to appeal to the earl is actually quite simple. As soon as you walk up to him, apologize in an adorable way while grasping his hand with both of your own.”

That sort of thing... she simply could not do it.

“For the sake of the future, remember there is no harm to it.”

Even if she thought of it in that way, she could not do it.

Because of that, she was not able to stand up straight as she discreetly entered the room. It was difficult for her to act accordingly to Tomkins' advice. She looked downwards and said:

“..... I went home for my notebook. I thought it was fine, because I planned to return immediately.”

“Well, I'm glad you're alright.”

“Oh, and I understand the symbols engraved on the diopside now. It is an ancient Nordic word. You see, my mother had summarized notes with the same symbols.”

Lydia opened the notebook to let him see for himself.

Even if I cannot hold his hand, I could try to persuade him.

Looking at this, he shouldn't be angry anymore, Lydia thought and smiled.

Edgar stood up with a light sigh.

Pulling away the chair near the table, he urged Lydia to sit down. Then, he bent down to face her.

“There, it's this one. You still remember it, right?”

Between two vertical lines, there was a symbol like an “x” mark.

“This is the letter m. These two are the ancient Nordic text for C and H.”

“MCH..... An abbreviation for what?”

“It's probably only the consonant spelling. I believe it's called Macha. In Irish mythology, she was the ancient goddess of war.”

After the loss of power, the spirits of numerous ancient gods slowly weakened and went to live in the underworld. It was that sort of tale.

Legend has it that there was a terrible, fearful force that fell upon the the gods.

Therefore, there came a human hero who fought for the name of the gods in return. This significance could now only be heard within the tales of this story. Despite the story's relation to fairy ancestry, compared to Lydia's lack of frequent contact with fairies, it was the poets and writers who understood their names.

"So, within the ancient Nordic text, the names of the Irish goddesses were engraved on the stone? How did something like this end up in the hands of a small clan such as Ceylon?"

"Well, it certainly is strange."

Perhaps, this was not very effective.. Lydia started to feel a little uneasy, as she lowered her head to secretly observe his reaction.

His ash-mauve eyes gazed toward her. The eyes of the two people met each other right at that moment.

"..... Lydia, this is important information. So, I am very grateful to you for investigating about it. However, though Tomkins advised me to wait another 30 minutes, I was worried sick. Are you also unable to believe in these words?"

Well, I still feel he's exaggerating things a little, she thought.

".....I'm sorry.

"

"Does telling me about where your going, or bringing a guard with you when you go out, make you that uncomfortable?"

Sure enough, his mood did not change for the better.

"I'm just not used to being escorted by someone without knowing them....."

"Do you feel constrained by me?"

Actually, she did. Because, without her permission, Edgar had said those words to her father, which had lead to her living there.

Edgar treated her as if she was his possession - a notion that she rejected very much.

I am not Ermine. I do not want to replace her.

Thankfully though, he had to comply with not touching her. Knowing him, he would have taken advantage of Lydia's mistake in order get closer to her.

It was an obvious tactic to show Lydia some sincerity. In that way, she would

feel a little guilty for her unladylike behavior.

“Ah, and there are two other war goddesses, just like Macha. They're sprites with the names of Nemed and Morrigan.”

Lydia continued with her explanation.

“With those two other goddesses, they were known as Anand, the triple war goddesses. Therefore, there should be two other similar stones of Diopside, with engravings of the names Nemed and Morrigan.”

“So, there are other stones with two of the goddesses’ names on them? Even though it is a possibility, do you have any evidence to prove it?”

“Yes, because that was what Ermine said. She said to absolutely not let Raven touch the other remaining Diopside stones.

”

“Ermine? Did you go see her?”

It was a slip of the tongue, but it was too late.

“You went to go see her? Ermine betrayed us, and yet you went. You should not have gone to speak with the enemy.”

“But, I knew that she was not going to hurt me. Moreover, she was worried about Raven. She said that if Raven touched the other pieces of Diopsides, his sprite would strengthen, and he would no longer be able to obey you. I believe that she was worried about this at the time the diopside was left here at the manor as well.”

Edgar, who stood up, held a displeased expression. He folded his arms and walked to his desk.

“Ah... maybe so, but you’re still too oblivious to the feeling of danger.”

Even from the beginning till now, he still scolded her.

Initially, she felt guilty for making him worry. But now, after some thought, she felt there was no need for that. Where she goes or what she does should all be her freedom of choice.

“Ah, yes. But since I have never seen Prince, no matter how terrible the things I’ve heard about him are, it doesn't feel real to me.”

“Your sense of reality is quite distorted, isn’t it?”

“I already told you beforehand that I’ll only listen to my father’s orders. And,

even so, my father would not be as arrogant as you and will also respect my opinion. If you want an obedient woman, you should capture Ermine's heart as soon as possible. Ah, but wait, you ignored her feelings, and went back and forth with many other women....."

"I did not ignore her feelings."

Lydia, who was slightly out of breath, closed her mouth.

As expected, he cared for her the most, right?

Lydia didn't know whether it was as Ermine said - that his love for her was only that of a master towards his loyal servant.

From Lydia's distressed expression, Edgar spotted Tomkins in his line of sight and called for him.

"The maid who followed Lydia, has she reported to you?"

"Yes. However, this time, when she found that Miss Lydia was not in her room, she thought Miss Lydia went to another room and didn't think too much of it."

The maid couldn't have known because Lydia deliberately wanted to hide the fact that she had snuck out secretly.

The one who was responsible for taking care of Lydia's daily life during her stay, and the one who arranged the rooms, was a young maid. She was a very serious-looking girl who believed that thanks to Lydia being Edgar's fiancée, Lydia was also a noble. Therefore, the maid didn't speak to her.

For the maid, the lower class did not dare to speak to those of upper class.

"Next time this happens, remove her from this premise."

"Ah, wait, wait. Edgar, this had nothing to do with the maid... Please don't dismiss her like that."

"If you watch yourself, she will not lose her job."

This was clearly in order to threaten Lydia. Lydia then clenched her fists and stood up.

"That's a dirty trick. In order to tie me down, you have to hurt those around you? You're acting just like Prince!"

Because he learned the ways of Prince, he discarded his sense of justice and had to heartlessly and relentlessly fight. But, in truth, Lydia knew he would absolutely never become someone like Prince because he always protected his

companions.

However, for Edgar who lost his companions, he couldn't refute if he was told to be the same as the tyrant of a secret organization, Prince.

The Prince who, in order to punish Edgar, had ended up hurting Ermine.

At this point, Lydia realized that she herself was the despicable person.

She should not be saying such horrendous things.

It would be a relief if Edgar had not been hurt by her words.

"I have already said that in order to protect you, I will stop at nothing."

He gave her a proud smile.

Then, Lydia's anger was sparked again.

"For me? Do you think that by saying such words, I will honestly obey you? If you really get rid of the maid, I'd despise you!"

"How can you be so stubborn?"

"If you hate my stubbornness, why not just kick me out?"

"I like the you who never listens to what I say at all. Even though you always make things difficult for me, I just can't help but love you anyway!"

Even when he's angry, he doesn't forget to flirt around.

All of a sudden, Lydia was in no mood to argue.

Instead, she sighed and drooped her shoulders helplessly.

She had already told him everything she knew about the diopside. She was about to leave, seeing as there was no purpose in her remaining here, when he called out to her.

"What else do you want?" She asked, feeling slightly irritated.

"There was letter addressed to you from your home."

She was about to reach out to retrieve the letter he was holding out when he drew his hand back.

"There is no signature on it. Can you open it here?"

Although she knew that it was because he was just being cautious, this made Lydia somewhat unhappy.

If she didn't do as he said, he would not give her the letter.

After she nodded, he gave her the letter. To have to read and write a letter in front of someone was uncomfortable enough - having to be watched as she was

doing it made it even worse.

“It was written by Lota.”

Lydia said as she read it.

She had traveled with her grandfather to the Netherlands. Since she was one of Lydia’s few human friends and Edgar's old friend, she was planning on returning to London soon, or so the letter basically said.

The letter was unrelated to Prince.

“Why? Was it really necessary for her to say this much? She must have written some malicious comments about me.”

She did, a little. However, as he unceasingly pressed her about it, Lydia got irritated.

“You really will be the most annoying type of husband!”

Determinedly saying these words, she dashed out of his study room and ran away.

“Become an annoying husband? What do you think, Raven?”

Raven, who walked into the study, had this question unexpectedly sprung upon him. He couldn’t help but be puzzled. He tilted his head and began to think.

“I am sure I will become like that. However, it was discovered before marriage, so what should I do?”

“Miss Lydia had said that?”

If one stood at the window overlooking the street, they could see members of the Scarlet Moon as they stood on guard around the mansion. Because Prince had killed someone close to them, their vengeance was surging high.

They were all fighting for themselves and their companions.

However, Lydia was different. She clearly had no reason to fight, but Edgar had gotten her involved.

Although, as a fairy doctor, she couldn’t allow the abuse from Prince's organization towards both fairies and humans to continue. It was simply because she had a pure sense of justice.

Despite that, Edgar wanted her to stay by his side. No matter what, he didn’t want to let her go. He was determined to protect her, no matter what happened.

However, because of their quarrel, Lydia had already deemed Edgar as an untrustworthy man.

Her sense of danger wasn't as sharp as Edgar's, nor could she strategize plans on the spot like Edgar. Because of this, he willfully felt he needed to chain Lydia down to himself in order to shield her.

"..... Or maybe not."

While looking out the window, Edgar grunted.

"I have never failed to pursue a girl before. Perhaps Lydia would be the first."

"... This is the first time I've heard you say those sort of weak words." Raven muttered.

"I was already doing my best, from the very beginning."

Lydia was also the first to be able to make him feel better with just her presence. And whenever she was beside him, he was able to dream of a better future.

Unknowingly, Lydia was becoming more and more important in his heart.

"Even if I cannot be with her in the end, I still have to protect Lydia."

Looking back, Edgar could see the confusion in Raven's eyes.

The faithful youth had always supported him.

Even if Ermine was gone, even if Lydia didn't have a change of heart, as long as he had Raven, Edgar had the courage to continue fighting on.

"Even if in the end, Lydia wouldn't wish to see me again, and even if I had to use those ruthless tricks she loathed, I will do whatever it takes to protect her future. She is a part of my obligation."

Even if he lost to Prince in the end, he wanted to ensure her safety.

"That's so heartless. Raven, would you even follow me then?"

"Of course, Lord Edgar."

He couldn't let Raven touch the Diopside. Remembering what Lydia said of Ermine's warning, Edgar felt moved, but also a bit uneasy.

Then, Edgar announced that he was going out.

"Where are you going?"

"I want to know about Ceylon's Diopside. Since the professor went to Cambridge, he's busy right now. However, his protege student is still at the

University of London, correct?"

"Do you mean Mr. Langley?"

"Ah yes, that's the name."

Chapter 3 - Nightmare Befalls London Bridge

Knowing that Edgar went out to town honestly made Lydia relieved. He must have been anxious because of Ermine after all. Certainly, it also had a direct relation towards Prince's movements as well. So regardless of the reason, Lydia thought perhaps Edgar was trying to hide his uneasiness.

After finding out about Ermine's suspicious behavior, Edgar was heartbroken, so he went to Lydia for comfort. He was probably mentally prepared from the beginning. But because of her sudden betrayal yet again, Edgar must have surely felt it was unbearable.

However, right now, Edgar did not intend for Lydia to witness his own weakness.

This made Lydia feel slightly upset.

Even if it was only a little, she wanted to hear his voice. She was hoping to hear his true thoughts, even for just a moment.

Before, when she was attacked by him, she cried. It wasn't only because of his ruthless behavior, but also the fact that he wasn't true to his heart, so she felt shocked. However, at that time, the Edgar that was unable to cope with his suffering and had wanted to rely on Lydia, was the Edgar who was truthful.

That was why Lydia wanted to help him even though the one he needed was not her. Though, whenever he was urgent in his words or forcefully held her, it didn't make her immediately uncomfortable.

Lydia, who was always running away, just didn't want to admit it to herself. Her heart actually became anxious whenever she had to determine whether Edgar was truly sincere or not.

"Miss Carlton, you have a visitor."

From her desk in her study room, she looked up and saw a maid standing at the door.

"A visitor? Who is it?"

"He only said that as long as he was called Ulya, you'd understand. Shall I

prepare tea?”

“Mr. Ulya? Well... Please let him in.”

Fortunately, Edgar was not at home. What was he doing though? As Lydia thought, Ulya entered her study room, hurrying over towards her and said:

“Miss Lydia, Professor, he..... Professor Carlton has gotten into an accident in Cambridge.”

Shocked, Lydia immediately stood up.

“An accident, how..... Father did.... ?”

“The situation is not clear. The University received the telegram, but it had only said that much. Anyway, please come with me to the University. There may be more details. And if necessary, we must go on a trip to Cambridge with the university’s faculty.”

Lydia only nodded, while gripping the fountain pen in her hand not knowing what to do.

Standing on the side was the maid, who had no time for negligence during her working hour. She seemed to have immediately informed Butler Tompkins, who fetched a hat and a scarf.

However, first, he had Lydia sit down on a chair.

“Please remain calm, Miss Lydia. Let’s wait until my Lord returns, alright? In this case, I believe it’s better for you not to go out alone.”

“There should be no problem if she's with me.” Ulya said.

“However, my Lord has just gone to the University of London. Perhaps he had also heard about the incident and will return soon.”

“Well, why don't we go meet with him there if we're going to the University?”

“It’s possible that you miss him.”

“Even so, Mr. Tompkins, please let me go with Mr. Ulya.”

It is a waste of time discussing as to what to do. I need to know about Father as soon as possible. Maybe the University already received details of the situation.

“Then, you need to ask someone to escort you.”

“The carriage can only take two people.” Ulya said.

“I'll prepare the carriage then.”

“So, you don’t trust me. We're only going to the University, and you cannot

allow me to take Miss Lydia?”

“I did not mean that.”

“Well then, please make the best use of your time, Miss Carlton.”

She nodded.

Her father had just gotten into an accident. For this important matter, to not even go and see him is too cruel, isn't it?

She thought that Tompkins was being unreasonably suspicious of Ulya.

Edgar must've have ordered to let no man close to Lydia, but this was her father's student, Ulya. To the person's first arrival at the Earl's residence, there was no reason to be so heavily guarded.

“Mr. Tompkins, it doesn't matter. This is my father.”

Lydia finally stood up. Tompkins looked worried, but he raised no objections.



“Ceylon's Diopside? The island itself is like a jewelry box, producing precious stones of various kinds.”

Langley said. He politely offered hospitality to Edgar who arrived in Professor Carlton's study room at the University.

It was a mess as always for he completely got mixed up as to where to put his things in their former places.

However, the professor's favorite student was carefully walking, avoiding to trip on the dusty small stones left on the ground. Edgar didn't know whether or not those stones were important for learning in the University.

Even so, though there was no logical reason, it gave an enchanting feeling. As long as it was in this room, even if it was dropped on the floor from above, it was as if an unknown person had left footprints on the ground with those stones. It was likely to be a remarkable worldwide discovery of the century.

“He is not a professor of romanticism, so he's not too interested in mythology. However, there are very interesting stones, Sir Earl.”

“Oh? How interesting?”

“That stone, when thinly sliced like so and placed in the text above, it reveals a double image.”

“Oh, in the Greek language, it is also known as Diopside, correct?”

“You certainly know very well in detail. The professor had said your knowledge was profound. I would have thought you must have received a famous teacher’s guidance.”

All the knowledge Prince gained was instilled into Edgar. Therefore, he didn’t know whether or not he was taught by a teacher.

Ironically, the strict education proved to be necessary knowledge for Edgar in order to own his responsibility as Earl.

‘You’re just like Prince!’... He thought about what Lydia said. He did not know how much of himself was influenced by Prince, but he had a strong sense of revulsion at the thought.

“It is this way, Sir Earl.”

Langley, walking behind the screen, led him to a place similar to a warehouse.

Although claiming to be uninterested in mythology, Carlton’s collection held a large number of minerals relating to its origin from Fei legends. It was clearly seen that he knew very much about the minerals.

“In fact, the Diopside name is a fairly recent discovery. There is a similar stone mentioned in ancient literature, but whether this is the same stone, is difficult to determine. If this stone is associated with the myth, then it should be in here.”

Langley pointed to a shelf piled with documents.

“Ah, but it is also related to Ceylon. Unexpectedly, the collection of fairy tales fell into the hands of someone in India.”

“I didn't know this was related to India.”

“Well yes, most of the natives are Buddhists or Muslims. Before, it used to be an English colony, occupied by Portugal, and now even the Netherlands. It has become a rather diverse island. However, the information on Ceylon itself should also be in there.”

Finally, he pulled out a file.

It was, however, a thick document. Edgar went to the window, flipping through the pages as he skimmed for any keywords.

Lydia said three Diopsides respectively had engravings of the three member names of the triple war goddesses. However, those pieces of Diopsides were

held by the descendant leaders of the Ceylon clan. But arguably, they were supposedly Irish goddesses.

If the gems were related to the Royal family, then they had to have appeared in mythology. There were always one or two legends regarding the magic behind them. Not to mention, there were three stones, which should mean to be significant.

By collecting gems associated with legends, the classification of minerals have unique insights for naturalists, or so Professor Carlton once said.

Edgar was now very close to a clue.

He continued to read the pages until his eyes soon stopped on a title, "Three-headed Serpent".

"Once upon a time, the gracious island was ruled under the evil king of the three-headed serpent. The gods attempted to ruthlessly overthrow the fiendish king but were actually defeated. In legends, it was said to be due to a pledge in which all the former gods have vowed not to kill this devil. Though, in the views of other gods, because the king did not exchange vows with the humans, there was no other race but only humans that could defeat him."

Edgar continued to read.

"The following is the birth and the adventures of a tragic hero, descendant of God. He endured through all trials and ultimately defeated the devil king. It goes without saying that this was a typical heroic myth found among Greece, Rome, and everywhere else across Europe."

However, in terms of this, Edgar was more concerned about the Diopside. After carefully looking at Professor Carlton's tiny handwriting, at the end, it briefly stated:

"The King's three serpent heads were cut off into three pieces of dark-green gems. The hero's descendants inherited these precious stones, and it was said that they were able to harness the power of the king to lead all fairies."

"Ah, this was India's classic epic. Because the story of the gem was so strange, it peaked the professor's interest."

"The gracious island, could that mean Ceylon?"

To Edgar's question, Langley nodded.

“The epic seems to most likely allude to Ceylon.”

If the legend originated from one of the small tribal kingdoms, Hadiya, then the murder of Mr. Kent meant he owned one of the devil king's heads.

Undoubtedly, by virtue of the legend, it was hard to say whether it was truly a devil's head. But regardless, the gems and the fairy magic seemed to be closely related. This was what he had learned from Lydia. It was said that the stones had hidden magical powers.

However, if the Diopside had this origin, then it was not clear what its relationship was with the war goddesses.

“Moreover, it was said that the source of the story came from a rough draft collection written by the 16th-century author, Brown.”

Langley mentioned as he flipped through further pages in the document.

“Are you saying it's really by that Brown?”

The man was an ancestor of the Earl of Ashenbert. He was the one who compiled the Blue Knight Earl's biography. At the time, Brown seemed to have good relations with the Blue Knight Earl during Lord Julius Ashenbert's residency.

From there, he heard a lot of the anecdotal stories regarding the Earl's ancestors. And so, in turn, Brown wrote a book.

Filled with fantasy-like adventures of fairies and magic, it now became England's most classic fairy tale. However, it was certainly a known fact that the man, who was called the Blue Knight Earl, served under King Edward I of England.

For Edgar, this book was also an important clue to his understanding of the Earl's true ancestral history.

Immediately, he was reminded of the author's name.

“Brown's draft collections said he heard these incredible foreign tales from someone else's words. At the time, it was the earl who told him the stories, so perhaps it was your ancestor.”

Though Langley was merely joking, Edgar couldn't ignore this marvelous breakthrough.

The Earl of Ashenbert had once traveled around the world. So, it was very likely

she also visited Ceylon.

So, if she had met with Hadiya's royal family... Then, wasn't it possible for the devil king and the war goddesses to be connected?

If this was the case, then 100 years ago, the Earl of Ashenbert was still battling against Prince's organization to look for the Diopside. That would make sense.

"Excuse me, Lord Edgar."

Raven's voice interrupted his thoughts. Careful to avoid the mountains of books, he stepped out from behind the screen.

"What's wrong?"

"Just now, there was a message delivered from your manor. It said that Miss Lydia and a University foreign student named Ulya are on their way here together."

"Lydia and that man together?"

At hearing Ulya's name, Edgar impulsively felt an urge to hit someone. He immediately couldn't help but clench his fists.

"He'd heard that Professor Carlton was in an accident at Cambridge, so in order to gain more details, he went to meet him with Miss Lydia."

"Ah! Professor had an accident?!"

Langley was shocked.

"Did you not hear of it?"

"Ah.... no, I haven't."

"Even as an assistant you haven't known, so how could an ordinary student like Ulya know?"

As he wondered, suddenly an ominous thought came to his mind.

"Lord Edgar, please wait for just a moment. I'm going to the office to confirm."

"No, wait a minute, Mr. Langley. Mr. Ulya..... By the way, I heard his adoptive father is English. Did you know?"

Not understanding why he asked such a thing, Langley gave a puzzled expression.

"Although I don't know him, I have seen Mr. Ulya. I heard his father was returning to the country from India due to his physical disability, a gentleman in a wheelchair..."

“Wheelchair? Then, was there a large area of burned scars on his face?”

“Well, actually, there was indeed a bandage.”

..... It is Prince.

Suddenly, Edgar felt a cold chill and sweat building up behind him.

He didn't know how to take all of this in.

Ulya was blatantly watching Lydia, and he also expressed deep displeasure toward Edgar's attitude. For Prince, that was certainly unlike his usual approach.

Normally, Prince's men would have used a more relaxed method of vigilance. Because Edgar had such preconceived ideas, he believed Ulya to be an ill-mannered man.

However, did Prince just take advantage of this loophole in Edgar's mind?

Unexpectedly like this, he didn't even think they would approach Professor Carlton.

Edgar was nearly shaking in anger. However, compared to Prince, he despised himself even more that moment.



Lydia's mind was filled with thoughts about her father, restless in the carriage. 'But I don't want to say anything right now', she thought.

By her side, Ulya remained silent.

“It wasn't a serious accident.”

Hearing him open his mouth to speak, she immediately lifted her head. He peered worriedly over her face as she then nodded.

“Ah, yes....”

Like Raven, he had black hair, dark eyes, and brown skin. Even with just his appearance, Ulya left a mysterious impression on Lydia.

As if obscuring the stars in his eyes, they seemed as deep as the hidden forest of the night. He remained motionless, as he stared into her eyes. Lydia began to feel uneasy.

Despite the urgency of the matter, she inadvertently went with a man alone. This man was her father's student, but that was no excuse. For that, Lydia

struggled to find other reasons to justify her decision.

She unconsciously diverted her attention out the window. Across from the building, there was a scenic view of the river bank.

The Thames River? The University should be in the opposite direction.

“Mr. Ulya, we’re going the wrong way. This is the London Bridge.”

As she planned to turn her head to look back, her hand was suddenly tightly grasped by him.

It was forceful, similar to how Edgar did it, but it was short of words and less tender-feeling.

In order not to let her escape, Ulya firmly grabbed Lydia’s hands, and she felt nothing but coldness. Then, he made a faint smile on his lips.

“You, what are you doing... please let go!”

Lydia said fearfully.

He did not answer. Ulya seemed different and so distant as if appearing in his eyes was a deep darkness all of a sudden.

He is not Mr. Ulya.

It felt like a dark shadow began seeping out from his whole body.

Next thing, he was surrounded by a formidable magic, something no human could have had. Something began to slip into Lydia’s mind, giving her a sick, nauseated feeling.

“..... Ah.”

It was difficult to even make a sound.

“Save me... Nico....!”

Although she remembered, as partners, she could call for him, but she also needed it to be heard. It wasn’t possible for him to appear if he couldn’t judge where the carriage was.

Sure enough..... He was useless, that fickle cat.....

As her body became paralyzed, Lydia’s conscious became swallowed up by an evil magic, sinking into a bottomless void.

It was Nightmare.

Thick unpleasant dreams, Lydia thought.

There was a hidden demon in the black Diamond called Nightmare, and Ulya

was manipulating it.

The black diamond had been broken to pieces and scattered about at that time. But, the Nightmare in the Diamond must've survived. Then, most likely it had fallen into the hands of Prince's right-hand man, a young boy whose mastery was in fairy magic, Ulysses.

Did Lydia fall into Ulysses's trap?

The dream cannot be controlled. Although she tried, the twilight view gradually appeared in front of her eyes, hazily appearing due to the nightmare's magic.

In the dream, it presented to her, within the darkness, a naked woman who appeared to be lying down.

She was covered with scars and bruises too horrible to look at. Lydia didn't know if she was still alive.

Trembling, she approached her.

Emerging from the dark, Lydia could see she had snow-white skin. Her deep, dark hair scattered messily across her pale face.

In spite of it all, Lydia was vaguely able to recognize her.

"Ermine....."

Lydia foolishly stood there, looking down at her without any response.

Suddenly, she noticed the silhouette of a man nearby.

Edgar was sitting at a distance, unmoving.

He was watching Ermine.

His beautiful eyebrows furrowed slightly, hiding the flaming anger in his ash-mauve eyes. As if he couldn't look away from her scars, he continued gazing at her.

Between the two, Lydia had no room to interrupt.

Lydia shut her eyes closed and prayed for the nightmare to go away.

"What are you doing, trying to escape from it all?"

Lydia immediately opened her eyes to see Ermine sitting up, facing her.

Then, Edgar's figure disappeared.

"Or should I open your eyes and speak the truth? You wish to be my substitute and become Lord Edgar's special woman in those eyes of his, correct?"

Unable to move her line of sight, Lydia gazed at Ermine's incredibly red lips.

Only, her beautiful face held no scars or bruises.

“I can let you replace me. What do you wish for?”

Her face was right in front of hers, so Lydia involuntarily took a step back. This made Ermine chuckle.

“I’m not with him....”

“You have no intention of marrying him? Do you believe that, by saying those kind of words, you can escape from your own innermost feelings in this dream? You must make a choice. For Lord Edgar, there are only two women. Is it me, or a fleeting lover? If you wish for his heart, then please become me.”

Ermine reached out towards Lydia. Trembling, Lydia’s wrist was caught in her ice-cold hand. Lydia panicked and tried to get away.

But, Ermine had already pressed her body against Lydia.

Right then, Lydia could feel her. Ermine’s whole body was soft but cold. Her naked appearance made Lydia felt she was an incomparable beauty. She was bewitchingly seductive and womanly. Yet, Lydia could not push her away.

Lydia didn’t have what Ermine had.

Ermine was enviably strong and beautiful.

From the moment Ermine spoke, Lydia felt like this.

Because she was strong, Ermine had the determination to leave Edgar’s side.

Perhaps her leaving was all for the sake of Raven because of her warning not to let Raven touch the stone.

Therefore, Edgar recognized her decision. Although he was unhappy, and felt betrayed once again, he had to let her go in order to respect her decision.

Even though they had to fight against each other as enemies, even if one of them would be killed, the bond that existed between the two, whether it was love or not, would never disappear.

Lydia was terribly envious.

However, no matter how envious she was, she and Edgar could never share the same past.

Now, in this dream, she did wish to become a little like Ermine. She didn’t want to be a “fleeting lover”.

Ermine, with her fingertips, scratched Lydia’s collar and sleeves, leaving

bleeding cuts on her skin.

Her red lips was closing in toward Lydia's. Paralyzed, despite Lydia's efforts to move, their lips overlapped together.

At that moment, Lydia felt a little of the darkness that surrounded her. Moving slowly, little by little, a scenery from the outside filled her line of vision. She could see the ceiling of the carriage and the dusk scenery outside the window.

The person in front of her was not Ermine, but Ulya.

Just left with a touch on the lips, was that Ulya?

Or perhaps it was in the dream.

Her mind was faint, and she couldn't sense reality.

Ulya, with his dark eyes, was dominated by nightmare. He wouldn't allow Lydia to move.

"Father's accident....."

In spite of this, no matter what, she wanted to confirm it. So, she so desperately tried to say those few words.

"Ah, I made that up."

She was so worried that, when she heard those words, she felt relieved. And now, thanks to that, she was beginning to feel more alert.

"I don't bear any grudge against you, but I must do it. In order for the demon's magic to grow, it needed bait for it to sustain itself. I only have this purpose."

With his slender hands, Ulya caressed Lydia's cheek.

She felt very perturbed, so she abruptly turned her face away.

Needing to escape was the only thought she had which held strongly in her mind.

"Well, continue to sleep for now. The day has finally turned dark, and the night is where the magic of the fairy realm appears."

Dreaming of nightmares was bait for Nightmare. The longer Nightmare fed on nightmares, filling more with terror, it will eventually lead to the death of the prey.

If this continued any longer, she'd be killed.

"Don't....."

Lydia closed her eyes, in order to avoid the hidden magic of the demon. As she did, nearly drained of energy, she tried her best to push Ulya away.

Moments after, she didn't know how she escaped from the carriage, but she ended up finding herself in a dark alley.

She was at the foot of the road, which emitted a foul smell due to the rain and mud. On both her sides were crowded buildings, while a mouse ran aimlessly on the ground. It was a terribly dirty place.

The street was filled with garbage, and incredibly there was not one shadow of a person in sight.

The demon was deliberately avoiding humans, or was this also a dream?

Lydia was confused. She ran through the alley, hoping to find anyone. She even stepped into small puddles, which splashed out sludge, though she couldn't care less.

Soon, she arrived at a spacious place. However, there was no one there, not even a carriage. She began to grow frightened. Before she could restrain herself from impulsively crying out loud, she carefully looked around her surroundings. At long last, she found someone walking under a street lamp.

It was a slender figure dressed in elegant clothes.

A reassuring feeling suddenly poured through her heart.

"Edgar!"

Lydia cried for help.

She wanted to run to him, but then she stopped.

Looking back on his side, there was a young woman she never saw before.

Clinging to his arm, his intimate female friend asked:

"Who is she?"

"Hmm, who?"

Uncaring, Edgar gave a sidelong glance at Lydia. In reply to the woman's question, the icy words he said shocked Lydia.

"Is that your former lover?"

"How could it be when I only love you?"

"Is that a lie?"

"It's true."

"Yes, well, now looking at her appearance, trembling and covered in mud, she really is not even worthy to be around you."

The two people chuckled, as they were ready to walk away.

"You're such a liar!"

He wasn't excessive, but that was rather too much. Lydia thought this, and then she rushed up to him and tightly grabbed him by the sleeve.

"You never said that to me, you said to me... You sincerely proposed to me!"

Then, Edgar shook off Lydia's hand. He even used his strength, for she fell to the ground.

"What's the matter with this woman? Edgar, you have mud on you now."

"Oh, how troublesome."

He said, unconcerned with Lydia falling into the puddle.

"Certainly, no matter what, he was all fun in games in the end..... yet I still wanted to believe him."

I wanted to believe in him. She believed in his heart. Even if she wasn't his favorite, she wanted to believe she was different from the other girls.

Because of this, she couldn't help but compare herself with Ermine.

Even if she was his second favourite woman after Ermine, she was different from many other girls. She was unique. Perhaps, one day, she could maybe become his number one girl.

"Lydia."

Edgar called out her name. From his voice, her heart felt a glimmer of hope as she raised her head. However, what she found was his sharp gaze peering down at her.

"You refused to listen to my words. You even left home with Ulya and kissed him. Unexpectedly, I didn't think you were that kind of casual woman."

Lydia immediately placed her hand to her mouth. What happened in the carriage, Edgar saw it all.

However, she couldn't tell what was real and what was a dream.

And then, like that, Edgar and his companion left together.

She was only thrown off to the side. Not long after, Ulya appeared before her.

But, she had no more strength to run away.

“Did he abandon you? How pitiful. I’m here to save you now.”

Bending over toward Lydia on the ground, he forcefully gripped her throat.

“The pain is only for a brief moment. You will soon forget about everything and be happy. Come with me to the bridge.”

The bridge? The London Bridge...?

Does that mean that those cases, those victims were.....

At that moment, a bright light flashed across the sky.

It was flash lightning. She had just come to understand that after there was a huge roaring of thunder, ringing in her ears.

Before she knew it, she found herself in the pouring, heavy rain.

By the touch of the raindrops across her face and neck, she felt it was not a dream but complete reality.

Lydia woke up from her deep sleep.

She held her posture in the carriage which sat motionless on the side of the road.

Then, all of a sudden, a dark water horse opened the carriage door, dragging Ulya out.

“.....Kelpie.”

Before he grounded his foot on Ulya, with his sharp fangs he tore away at the dark shadow.

Is this another nightmare? It seemed as if the feral water horse was suppressing the shadow. Constantly fluctuating up and down, the complex figure was unable to maintain a fixed shape.

Kelpie was about to push the figure into Ulya’s body, when the shadow suddenly made a counterattack.

It sunk its teeth into Kelpie’s head.

“Whoa, this bastard!”

While on Kelpie, the moment of the black shadow’s teeth loosened, his body immediately flew away from Ulya’s body. It rapidly brushed past Kelpie, skillfully going at the speed of a leopard.

In a blink of an eye, the shadow was gone. Kelpie clicked his tongue and shrugged to the side.

“It doesn’t matter anyway. Soon, we’ll be able to find it and fetch it back.” Kelpie said, as he walked away from Ulya who was losing consciousness. Approaching towards Lydia’s direction, he asked:

“Hey, are you alright? Wake up already.”

“.....Well, but, Kelpie, how did you get here.....”

Lately, he hadn’t been around. She remembered Nico said he was definitely up to mischief, but how did he suddenly appear here?

When the lightning flashed through the sky again, Kelpie returned to being a human.

With black curly hair and a delicate, beautiful face, he was a human without any flaws.

He roughly pulled Lydia’s hand, helping her up to stand upright. His unruly manners were indeed his style.

Drenched in the heavy pouring rain, the water horse, who was in the water, revealed a happy, playful look.

“You’re all wet. Are you cold?”

It was cold. However, she was more concerned about another matter than this one.

“Ah, Kelpie, what have you been doing recently?”

“Oh, just handling small matters. I’ve been taming the Nightmare.”

Taming the Nightmare?

Wrinkling his eyebrows, Kelpie frowned as Lydia sought shelter from the rain.

“Even if its power will strengthen again, as of right now, it had just been reborn. Once it starves again, no matter who it is, it will immediately attack using memories of the past.”

As he spoke, he used his palms to firmly wipe away the rain from Lydia’s cheeks. Although crude, it was his way of expressing his sympathy. However, Lydia still felt disturbed from the chaotic situation and was not soothed at all.

“... Why would you tame the Nightmare?”

“Some people want to keep it.”

“But who could that be?”

“Just a hobby of this kid named Ulysses. He used containers like Ulya to let it

mature and grow. That way, it gets trained into the human body.”

“Ulysses is trying to use Mr. Ulya as a container to tame Nightmare?”

“Yeah. But that guy, Ulysses, seems to keep feeding the Nightmare bait. So, the power of the Nightmare became too strong. I was worried so I followed it, but I ended up losing it. I’d never thought it would attack you though. Luckily, I found you. Had it been otherwise, I would’ve been worried to death for you.”

Kelpie didn’t even notice Lydia was trembling with fear as he easily spoke those words.

“However, the nightmare got away. If I don’t immediately recapture it, it could start attacking people again.....”

“I.....I can't believe you're doing this kind of thing for Ulysses! Why? Do you not know he is Edgar's enemy?!”

Kelpie’s face suddenly became cross. He crossed his arms and peered down at her.

“I'm not like that guy. I'm doing this for you.”

“For me.....?”

“As long as you stay around the Earl, you will be in danger. Ulysses wanted me to tame the Nightmare according to his conditions. As long as I do him the favor, he will not try to harm you you.”

He made a deal with Ulysses.

Lydia suddenly felt her anger surge.

She used both her hands to push him away.

“How can you believe in Ulysses’ words?”

“To believe it or not is a separate matter. This is still a deal.”

“That guy is not only the master of fairy magic, but he is also very cunning. You ought to expect that he wouldn’t abide to the deal! In fact, I....I was attacked by the nightmare. Rather than it being a coincidence, it must have been Ulysses or Prince who ordered it!”

Going by Kelpie’s contract, Ulysses did not directly attack Lydia, but he allowed Ulya and his nightmare to attack her instead.

Kelpie’s expression changed.

“Really? Not a coincidence?”

“Yes, Mr. Ulya was one of my father’s students. He told me my father had gotten into an accident, and so he brought me here. You worked with Nightmare to attack me!”

Nobody could be trusted.

Ulya and Kelpie were both part of the enemy that surrounded her.

Even Ermine rebelled against Edgar as an enemy.

Prince had already entered among them. Slowly and little-by-little, tearing them apart.

Lydia ran out into the heavy rain.

“Hey, Lydia!”

However, Kelpie hesitated. He didn’t immediately pursue her.

Lydia became very anxious. ‘I must return quickly.’

Return? Return to where?

To Edgar?

At the sudden thought of him, Lydia became very distressed.

‘You kissed Ulya. I didn’t expect you to be this kind of casual woman....’ That was all a dream. Something nightmare had shown her.

However, she still felt his touch on her lips.

Tears streamed down her face.

I despise this. I don’t wish to cry for such a thing. If it was Ermine, she would not cry.

The more she ran, the more her vision blurred.

It must be the rain.

As she went about aimlessly, she unknowingly reached the London Bridge.

There was a thundering storm, and there was not a pedestrian in sight. The carriages were full of people who moved about, but none of them took notice of Lydia. Though she ran through the mud, she didn’t care.

As she was deeply lost in her thoughts, a luxurious carriage pushed by two horses suddenly stopped in the middle of the bridge.

The door opened and someone came out. Because it was too dark, along with raining, it was unclear as to who it was. There was a man leaning on a walking cane, his legs and feet were not too agile.

Still, he kept his posture straight. His shoes that left footsteps were new, indicating he was from the upper class.

“Excuse me, Miss. Your formal dress seems soiled.”

The voice sounded like an older gentleman.

“If you don't mind, let me escort you home.”

Although his words sounded very gracious, as he approached, Lydia felt strangely intimidated. She couldn't help but take a step back.

A lightning bolt flashed, revealing the face of the man who was wrapped full in bandages. It was such a terrifying appearance, it made Lydia catch her breath.

As the lightning continued to split across the sky, it clearly revealed to her eyes the boy who sat in the driver's seat.

With a knowing smile on his face, was a pale young boy with golden hair.

“Ulysses...?”

Lydia felt her legs buckle and her eyes turned back to the old man before her.

Could this be.... Prince?

'I have to escape!' she heard herself think in her mind, but she was unable to move a step as she wished. With all her strength, she could only, very slowly, back away.

She saw that, as the man approached her, he held a rope in his hand. But then, her back hit the railing of the bridge. There was no where else she could run to.

“She is Edgar's woman.”

Ulysses said, as he sat in the driver's seat above.

Then, there came a chuckle from inside the bandages of the man's face.

“I thought she would be a better woman. Before I was even able to choose and instill my taste in women and their uses within him, he ran away.”

Even though he was belittling Lydia, she had no time to put it to mind.

Already, she found that the rope was set around her neck.

This made her remember those bodies that committed suicide by hanging at the London Bridge.

It had now become apparent that Lydia was selected as Prince's next victim.

Although she had just escaped from the hands of Nightmare, she could not escape her fate of Prince's decision anymore.

That was all Lydia could think of. She had no time to resist. Then, he grabbed her shoulder and pushed her back past the railing.

At this moment, she felt her body was floating.

She was going to fall over. However, instantly, the man's hand loosened.

He immediately fell back, and a dark figure appeared behind him.

Meanwhile, someone else caught Lydia's arm. She felt her body jerk back from the bridge railings behind her. As she did, she heard the voice of a man who, in throaty hoarse screams, declared he wanted to kill someone.

Lydia just sat on the ground until she was finally able to look up. Holding a knife from his pocket, it was Raven standing beside a collapsed man on the ground.

"Prince... Is he dead?"

"That was only his shadow. It wasn't him."

From there, Lydia heard a familiar voice.

The man who, with his hands carefully removed the rope tied around her neck, was Edgar.

"Shadow.....?"

"Prince himself can hardly move. He used his shadow as a replacement to go out on his own. However, his substitute was killed just now."

"Ah, right, Ulysses is there!"

Lydia, with a panic-stricken look, looked toward the carriage. However, there was no one at the driver's seat.

Though Raven checked all around the carriage, he returned to Edgar's side, shaking his head.

The danger seemed to have passed.

However, Lydia's heart was then filled with another kind of despair.

She thought about what the Nightmare showed her in her dreams. To look into Edgar's eyes, she felt it was unbearable.

If she looked up, like in her dream, would he coldly peer down at her?

And seeing as how Lydia's whole body was covered in mud, perhaps she could frighten away a love of 100 years, cause them to vanish in thin air.

As she was anxious to fix her clothes, Lydia noticed the collar around her neck was split.

In the dream, it was from Ermine... or was it from Ulya's hands?

She placed her fingers on the skin of her neck, feeling shallow scars.

Feeling Edgar watching her, she quickly hid her hands to the ground, away from sight. If her legs still had strength left, she would have ran away from there.

If Edgar wasn't going to say anything, he should have just walked away.

But, he still remained here. Then, on her shoulders, she felt a warm feeling and so she looked up.

Edgar had draped his coat over her body.

"Don't, don't do that.....It'll get dirty."

She hurriedly tried to return his coat to him. But, he took his folded-collared coat and placed it back on her. Tenderly, he gave her a smile and said:

"What you are saying... With this relationship between you and me, do you still mind such things?"

"I would mind... For that kind of relationship."

"Lydia, are you angry with me? I've put you through such a terrible experience. If I had only been more vigilant....."

"No, it was my own fault that I was careless. After I heard Father was in an accident, I was frightened to death. Then, the Nightmare from Mr. Ulya came out from inside of him."

"I will patiently wait a while to listen to you, so speak again slowly. Before I came here, I found Ulya on the ground. So, the Scarlet Moon members went and escorted him home. Therefore, you must first calm down, and let's take care of your wound."

"I am not injured.... It's just that the Nightmare made me dream. Through horrific kinds of nightmares, it tried to drain my energy and kill me."

Listening to her fragmented story, Edgar had no way to completely understand. Even though he told her to take a moment before speaking, she couldn't help but keep going.

"It was frightening. I was desperate to escape, and then later I found you.... However, when I asked for your help, you went away with another woman and walked away from me."

"That was just too much. However, that was just a dream, right?"

She continued in a panic state...

"It was a dream. In the dream, you said that I was a casual woman."

"Did I say that?"

"Yes, you also already said you didn't like that type."

This was a matter in Lydia's dream. Therefore, Edgar was actually blamed for, but he was certainly puzzled.

"Well, I am sorry. I owe you an apology. Forgive me."

"Ah, what... that is. Don't apologize to me. Did you see it?"

Lydia had no idea what she wanted him to say.

"Well, what exactly did you see?"

"I kissed Mr. Ulya."

".....Well, though I may be petty and become a vexatious husband, I will not brood over what happens in dreams."

"But, I don't know..... It may not have been a dream!"

"Not a dream?"

"I thought it was a dream."

Lydia firmly grasped her opened collar.

Suddenly, she regretted saying those unnecessary words.

Ah, what to do. Even though she wanted to run away, her legs couldn't muster up the strength to move.

However, Edgar put his hands to her ears and, burying his fingers in her hair, he pulled her towards him, holding her in an embrace.

Startled, she struggled at first, but he held her tightly.

Her face began to grow hot, and Lydia began to panic.

"Didn't we agree for you not to touch me?"

"It was just in the manor where I cannot touch you, right? Now, we're outside."

He plausibly said that absurd reason and didn't let go.

In the end, she gave up resisting.

"I'm sorry, I should have come earlier to save you."

When he spoke, it sounded like he was in so much pain. She felt as if she really couldn't push him away.

Edgar would always blame himself. Was it because he was unable to save

Ermine from the experience?

However, as his hands gently caressed her hair, Lydia suddenly felt that her experience with Nightmare completely disappeared.

“Hey, how long do you plan on flirting?”

Nico’s voice brought her back to reality.

Raven stood in the rain, as if waiting however long it took. Beside him was a gray cat with a very displeased look, while his hands were on his hips and his nose snorting.

“Nico... you came.”

“When I came, I brought the earl. Lydia, you asked for help, right?”

“.... Yes, you heard me?”

“It’s impossible for me to hear you. It was the goblins nearby that told me. I’m the leader of the fairies in London. So, when the fairies are in trouble, I oversee them.”

“So, that’s how it is. Nico, thank you.... For what I said before, I’m sorry.”

Grabbing Nico’s hand, Lydia candidly expressed her gratitude.

She intended to hug him.

“Whoa, stop that, I’m going to get mud stuck on me.”

This cat was worse than Edgar.

Lydia flared up in anger and released his hand. But, thanks to Nico’s relaxed attitude, Lydia was able to calm down a little as well.

However, that moment was short-lived.

Raven, who always stood motionless, suddenly changed his posture.

The rain gradually became smaller and started to drizzle instead. Raven paused, his dark eyes intently gazing into the dreary darkness. Then, he swiftly rushed out.

It looked as if he was going to jump on the rail, but instead he turned back behind toward the stone pillars and swung his knife.

At the same time, fleeting glimpses of a figure escaped from Raven’s blade and kept running from there.

Unexpectedly, they quickly dodged Raven’s one-hit kill attack.

But, that was hardly surprising. Certainly, the one who truly understood him

was Ermine.

“Did you come to spy, Ermine? Prince is really no good at employing his followers, then.”

Edgar said as he looked at her.

“I am not here to spy. I am here to catch the Nightmare that escaped. Because Miss Lydia was attacked by it, it appears Kelpie is restraining it.”

Ermine deliberately kept her distance from Raven, as she slowly walked across the bridge.

“I see. Then, where is it?”

“Please be careful, Lord Edgar. I'm afraid it is still nearby. Ulysses raises it here. Therefore, as its hunger is exceeding, it is prowling around here.”

“Are you still worried about me?”

He said it in a sarcastic tone. However, Ermine's feelings and expressions did not change.

When Lydia spoke with her, she had the same strong will to suppress her emotions. She kept everything in her heart, never confiding in anyone.

The only way to understand her is to find her reason for betraying Edgar. However, so far, no matter what it was that was said to her, she had not yet wavered.

Her brother also had the same strong will.

Raven refused to forgive his sister, a traitor to Edgar. Aiming quietly at the gap of their distance, Raven once again jumped towards Ermine.

But, it was already too late to avoid it.

Ermine counter blocked Raven with the blade of her own knife. But she was kicked by his knee and and crashed into the bride baluster.

“Stop it, Raven!”

Even though he heard Edgar's voice, he did not stop and approached Ermine, who was already unsteady.

“Did you not hear me?”

“Lord Edgar, regardless of what you say, even if I would even wager on my life, I must bring an end to this matter.”

“Do not speak nonsense.”

“No. If I accept the return of my sister, it is equivalent to placing Lord Edgar’s life in jeopardy. If I continue on like this, I cannot serve you.”

“Raven, no one is perfect. Everyone will make mistakes.”

Edgar attempted to convince Raven further, but Raven was already close to Ermine. As if to restrain her brother, she swung her knife at him but, as her powers were not restored in enough time, he easily caught her wrist.

Raven twisted her arm, with his knife arriving a breath’s away from Ermine’s pale neck.

His hands stopped there, because he suddenly sensed a tense pressure filling the air. A dark shadow had already surrounded them all.

Lydia felt a dark, cold chill run through her. This feeling was the same as before.

“.... Nightmare!”

As her voice spilled out of her, the shadow rushed at Lydia, going at the speed of a panther.

Edgar quickly covered her, shielding her with his body.

And then, the two of them fell over to the pavement on the ground. The warm smell of blood grazed her cheek.

The demon’s magical shape was uncertain. Even if Lydia observed carefully, she couldn’t distinguish what it was. Edgar could clearly feel the evil aura, and so he moved Lydia’s body closer to him.

Side by side, they looked toward the shadow’s direction as it grew thicker.

“Lord Edgar!”

Raven shifted his attention to Edgar, his knife instantly moving away from Ermine.

Ermine could have escaped her brother’s grasp, but she didn’t.

Nightmare responded to Raven’s voice, abruptly changing direction and started to pounce toward him instead.

It appeared that Nightmare had no sense of vision, for Raven noticed it had dug its fangs into Ermine instead.

Ermine, using her Selkie’s magic, shrugged off the Nightmare.

Suddenly, the presence of Nightmare seemed to disappear.

It was Raven who blocked Ermine from Nightmare’s attack. Her chest bleeding,

she vigilantly shouted to him:

“Careful, nightmare is still nearby.”

“..... Sister, that Nightmare was released by your partner.”

Raven tightened his grip on the knife.

Did he really intend to kill her himself?

“Raven, quickly move away from here. Don’t fight against Nightmare.”

“I cannot forgive you.”

“Well..... I see.”

“You said you simply wished to serve Lord Edgar. I believed in you.”

“Do as you wish. However.....”

“However?”

“However... please, you must listen to me one last time. If you touch Nightmare, the sprite in your body, will be under its influence....”

“As if I'd listen to you... !”

As he spoke, he swung his knife down.

Lydia, who was prepared for the worst, did not divert her eyes.

She felt Edgar’s arms tighten around her. But, it was too late. They could only sit and watch.

However, Ermine did not fall. Raven only slit Ermine’s tie that fell to the pavement on the ground.

He feebly placed his hands down, and Ermine slowly turned to look at him.

At the same time, Lydia felt that once again the aura of the nightmare was filling the air nearby.

She looked around and found the shadow standing next to the rail above Ermine.

Before Lydia was even able to make a sound, the nightmare acted fast.

Raven spun around and pounced towards Nightmare. However, the instant he made contact with the shadow, he was strongly pushed back.

“Raven!”

As Ermine rushed to him, a black figure caught up before her and became entangled with Nightmare.

Suddenly, the figure knocked Ermine aside. On the railing opposite railing, it

glared with hostile eyes at the Nightmare.

“Kelpie...”

Lydia whispered.

“Selkie, get back!”

Standing upright, Kelpie rushed over to Ermine with a shout.

“It escaped from its cage. It’s slightly troublesome.”

The so-called cage, is the one referred to Ulya, who was used as a container for the Nightmare, right?

In order to tame Nightmare, Ulya was used as both a container and a cage. If that was the case, then his physical body had considerable endurance to withhold the demonic power.

As of now, Lydia knew the story behind his upbringing was a lie, but what kind of person was he truly?

Before she finished her thoughts, the bridge began to shake violently.

She felt as if it was going to collapse.

And now, Kelpie was confronting the Nightmare head on.

However, this time, his battle with the Nightmare was different from the one with Ulya. He was struggling hard.

“Kelpie, the Nightmare’s power strengthens through dreams. Therefore, it will not work for you to use your usual approach...!” Ermine shouted to him.

“Shut up, I know!”

Nightmare was no longer in the wild state of a beast. It seemed to constantly expand in its shadows, almost swallowing everything nearby.

“Raven, let’s go....”

Edgar came around to Raven who’d fallen, intending to help him up

.

“Hey! Earl, leave him! That boy’s sprite has been forced to awaken once he had touched Nightmare!”

Nico, who supposedly escaped with such stealth, suddenly appeared and shouted at him.

Edgar was taken aback.

That moment, Raven rose up with his eyes filled with murderous intent, forcing

Edgar to take one step back.

Wielding a knife, he pointed it to his master.

Although he was able to avoid it from a distance, it still shocked Edgar.

The old Raven cannot control the killing impulses of his sprite. And when he loses himself, he dangerously and indiscriminately murders others. Even for Edgar, it was difficult to stop him, but Raven could never go against Edgar with a knife.

Though now, he began attacking all obstacles that entered his line of vision.

Ironically, that was one thing Raven did not take into consideration.

It was unlike Raven to give futile attacks as he did so towards Edgar. Or rather, due to the Raven's vision, Edgar was evasive enough to move outside the gap of Raven's sight, dodging his attacks.

"Lydia, run! The Nightmare has gone ballistic. It's impossible to stop it!"

Kelpie shouted, as he seemed to be at the center, wrestling against it at the same place.

The bridge swayed more and more wildly.

Still focused on Raven, Edgar desperately tried to restrain him. However, to remain close to Raven, who was wielding a knife, was no simple task.

"Edgar, it's dangerous!"

Lydia shouted. While trying to run to his side. But, the bridge kept rocking about making her unable to stand up.

She wanted to believe that all of this was not real. That the bridge was not shaking so vigorously, and that it was Nightmare's power distorting the space, causing the bridge to vigorously shake.

"Lydia, I'm okay... However, those are not Raven's eyes."

Edgar said bitterly. At the other end of his line of sight, Raven suddenly squatted down and fell to the ground.

Lydia then noticed that he was stabbed in the foot with a knife. In the opposite direction, there also appeared to be a few shadows.

One of them was Ulysses, but it was uncertain as to whether those men behind him were humans or his evil fairy subordinates.

"There's only one way to grasp this beast. But, you must already be paralyzed,

right?”

The shadowy figures instantly surrounded Raven, intending to take him away.

Seeing this, Edgar wanted to rescue him from the hands of the enemy.

At the same time, he wanted to take Lydia away from this violently-shaking chaos.

However, didn't the dark nightmare's shadows deteriorated their perceptions of reality already?

Eventually, he made a decision, as he pulled Lydia's hand.

“

Nico, which way should I go?”

“It's this way, hurry up!”

Nico seemed to have found an escape from the nightmares through a construction site on the road.

In Edgar's arms, Lydia finally tried to stand up.

“You cannot escape.”

From behind them came the voice of Ulysses.

“It has indeed been a situation where literally, one-by-one, everything you've had is slowly being taken away from you.”

Chapter 4 - Queen and the Fairies

Once upon a time, living hidden in the forest, an elderly old man said: “Ah, that child has a fairy living inside his body. He’s fated to become a warrior for the king.”

At the time, his sister knew the secret why her younger brother’s black eyes held a mystic-green essence.

This cynical old man appeared to have deep knowledge of the place named Hadiya, fully aware of its famous legend across the land.

The white, pale sister along with her younger brother with brown skin had come to visit the elderly man several times before.

The boy was already five years old but was not able to laugh or speak. Because of that, he treated as taboo by his mother. And, as his mysterious sister was also the same, she was despised in the same way.

Shortly after the mother gave birth to the elder sister, they were driven out of the farm the English were managing. It was said that the reason was because the child resembled the man who fooled around with the woman there.

The siblings did not know who their father was.

The elder sister only knew that her younger brother was a special child.

Although they were young, his strength was commendable.

Once, a ruthless man had intended to attack the sister, but instead was killed by her brother using a large stone.

The sister covered the body with leaves and threw the blood-stained stone into the pond.

If her brother was discovered to be his murderer, he would surely be apprehended.

However, she believed he committed no crime.

The small country no longer existed now. However, in order to protect that nation, the brother was granted an enchanted power by the heavens.

It was said to be a horrendous sprite.

However, in the past, an ancestor of the royal family surrendered himself to the sprite, forcing it to vow to forever serve the royal family.

Because its power was used for a protection, it couldn't possibly be evil.

The words the elderly man said had given the young older sister great courage.

Though the younger brother couldn't speak, he understood the words of others well. His face may have lacked expression, but it didn't mean he lacked feelings.

As they returned on the trail from the depths of the forest back to their cottage, he stretched out his hand, gingerly grasping his elder sister's hand.

From that moment, she was determined.

'I must let you see the king. He is the one whom you must serve.' She had said to him.



When Ermine woke up, she found herself lying at the bottom of a lake.

The colors of dark blue surrounded her, filling her vision. But in her fairy eyes, she could spot the swarms of small fish and the gentle sway of the seaweeds.

The water around her was cool and gentle to the touch. She felt at ease, as if the vitality of life found in the natural world flowed through her body.

The wound left from nightmare's attack gradually became less painful as well. She noticed the blood seemed to have stopped.

Therefore, she carefully confirmed her wound with her fingers. As she continued to think of what happened, she soon came to a conclusion.

This was the Serpentine Lake of Hyde Park.

In order to chase after Lydia, Kelpie settled here in London rather than his original home.

"Hey, you woke up?"

With a small splash of water, there appeared a jet-black, water horse.

Ermine looked up at the beautiful figure, at once remembering she had been saved by him.

Though he was clearly a fierce horse, he was unexpectedly very meddlesome.

"Since you are a selkie, you should remember: your stamina will recover rather quickly in the water. Seawater is much better for you, but there is no seawater in London."

Needless to say, Kelpie didn't want to simply help her for no reason.

Therefore, Ermine cautiously sat up.

"What happened to all of us?"

"All of us? Do you mean the Earl and the rest of them? Doesn't your master, Prince, want to kill the Earl?"

Her concern for the Earl and his followers after betraying them certainly surprised Kelpie.

Prince does not want to immediately kill Edgar. And from Kelpie's calm expression, it also appeared that Lydia was safe. Therefore, Ermine truly only cared for one person.

"That Raven brat was taken away by Ulysses."

Though Ermine was aware and thinking of it in her mind, it was Kelpie who spoken the words aloud without much thought.

"That bastard Ulysses, he actually left you when you fainted."

Ulysses did not trust Ermine. It was only by Prince's order was Ermine assigned to him, so Ulysses was trying to use her as much as possible.

To have Ermine retrieve the Diopside after the murder of the man who held it, Ulysses intended to test the stone's influence on Raven. As for how the event would turn out, he did not intend to inform Ermine.

However, the colour of the stone, and it's unique trait of projecting a double image, was just like what the elderly man who resided in the forest had said. Since this was a jewel of the Hadiya's Royal family, she had learned that it must not be touched by Raven. However, the moment she realized this, Edgar had already discovered that the Diopside was in her possession.

And once the Diopside matter was discovered, she could no longer stay by Edgar's side. Despite this being Ulysses's rash miscalculation, because he was unable to confirm the effects of the stone, he was enraged.

Originally for Ulysses, the sprite was a mere weapon. If it became of no use, he would discard it.

".....Raven was caught?"

Instead of being concerned of her abandonment as a sacrifice, she was more worried for her younger brother, Raven.

Then she remembered, suddenly the ballistic power of the Nightmares escaped and met against Raven and, at that point, Kelpie had appeared... ...After that, she had lost consciousness.

Raven gave up the chance to kill her.

It was either his own will, or he was just obediently following Edgar's command. But whether what he did was good or not, Ermine did not know.

She chose this path. Now, she still didn't know where it would lead to.

Perhaps if he died, that was better for them.

"I must go....."

But in spite of all this, since she was still alive, she couldn't possibly wait here and remain idle.

As she was standing up, she was abruptly blocked by the water horse's forefoot.

"Not so fast. I also have something to say to you. There are things I must ask you."

Not allowing me to leave, that was to be expected. Ermine thought.

She decided to give up and hoped that everything would end.

Perhaps he would never forgive her. If one were to anger a water horse, what would happen? As she mentally prepared herself, she moved her line of sight towards the two pearl-black eyes that gazed at her.

"Is Ulysses planning to trick me? He said he wouldn't do anything to hurt Lydia, but that was all a lie. You knew?"

"It is not Ulysses who orders Ulya, but Prince."

"Do you plan on deceiving me with this sophistry?"

"It is Miss Lydia you wish for, correct? Prince was only practicing his torment to torture Lord Edgar. Although he wishes to capture Miss Lydia from Lord Edgar's side, he does not necessarily need to kill her. One day, you will be able to take her to the Highland Lake or any other place to live."

"Practice of torture to torment the Earl? Won't Lydia also be tormented by his tactics?"

"It is possible."

It was very likely it would make Lydia wish to die than live.

"This guy Ulysses said that up till now, because of the earl, a lot of women have

already suffered.”

According to Ermine, after fleeing from Prince, Edgar was very careful not to remain close with a particular lover. Or perhaps she should say that in general, he often treated several women at a time as lovers. If he cared strongly for one, she would surely be targeted by Prince.

That was why the so-called “women” Kelpie mentioned referred to the time of Edgar’s imprisonment. Those girls had been arbitrarily assigned as his own.

Nevertheless, those close to him always met with a miserable fate. In turn, Edgar most certainly was hurt by it all. However, no matter what time, regardless of who was punished, Edgar had to keep his composure.

Because only through this, Prince would stop resorting to such measures. Eventually, Edgar became a soulless, living breathing doll, which was exactly what Prince wanted.

Of course, Edgar only pretended to be what Prince hoped for in front of Prince himself, but in truth, he had not lost his soul.

“Well, for me, I don't want Lydia to get hurt and that was the only reason why I made a deal with him. Ulysses, however, that guy used my tamed Nightmare to attack Lydia!”

He gave a wild and dangerous look, his mane flared out fiercely. The dark water horse then reverted back to his human form and gripped Ermine’s throat.

“You wanted to give me a broken and tattered Lydia, didn't you? You clearly knew this much, and you still asked me to help Ulysses?”

Had Ermine been human, his brute force would have choked her to death. She gasped, not being able to breath. It was not because of suffocation but because of the deep pain at which Kelpie’s nails dug into her throat.

For all of this, she was enduring it patiently. She had already expected him to be very angry.

She was ordered by Ulysses to propose the idea to Kelpie and build an alliance. And it wasn’t because Kelpie couldn’t go back on his words and would be obedient in order to ensure Lydia's safety. It was in order to get Kelpie involved in the whole mess.

Of course, once he was involved, it was not known how he would have

behaved. Nevertheless, she believed that the uncertainty of it was perhaps better.

Because he intended to protect Lydia, his will and magic would make it impossible for Ulysses to predict.

As she continued to endure it patiently, Kelpie suddenly threw her to the side, releasing his grip.

“Why do you have that expression? It's like you're already dead inside.”

It seemed that Kelpie thought she was no longer worth his anger. Therefore, he shoved her away from him. This hurt her more deeply than the nails that pierced her. At the same time, in her heart surged with feelings she could no longer suppress.

She didn't want to give up hope, and so that was why she made a resolve to just bear everything on her own, suffer through her loneliness.

“What do you understand? Clearly, you place yourself above that of a dark fairy (Unseelie Court). Even though you are fond of Miss Lydia, isn't it because you're frantic you have nothing to pass your idle time with? You've never even wanted to sacrifice for her, and you've never felt the need to protect her!”

Unconsciously, she strongly raised her voice.

Kelpie gave a surprised expression and closely watched her.

“Is this because of the matter with your younger brother? I suppose your head wasn't only filled with the Earl.”

Then, he smiled knowingly.

“So, you were not completely obediently to Ulysses then.”

“.....If so, then what?”

“It doesn't matter. If you want to take advantage of me, then I will accept it. I don't hate strong women.”

“...is that so.”

He was a water horse that liked Lydia.

“But I also want to make use of you. Since its like this now, I must know how those guys will act.”

“Do you wish for me to help you?”

“I just told you, let's make use of each other. I don't want to be assisted by

Ulysses's subordinate!"

Kelpie angrily said. But, she didn't know why, he put his hand on her head and ruffled her hair.

Strange, I don't know the meaning of this. Though Kelpie stared at her, Ermine felt he didn't seem to mind her or appeared angry. And her hair became a mess. "But then again, you'll probably be more reckless than Lydia. Be obedient for now and remain in the water until your neck injury recovers."

Kelpie said these last words before leaving. Because he injured her neck, was this unruly attitude his way of expressing an apology to her?

For a water horse to actually be worried, she felt that it was all a somewhat strange situation.

Ermine sighed and gently combed through her hair, which was disheveled by Kelpie's hand.

Why did Kelpie say such things?

No matter who it was, Ulysses or Edgar, Kelpie was not on either side. And Ermine was a traitor to both. Yet he was the only one who did not lie when he spoke.

With Kelpie becoming more involved, wouldn't the outcome of all this just become all the more chaotic?

Being too lonely and in need of someone who was neither friend nor foe -- maybe this alliance would be good for herself as well.



As he was thinking of Raven, Edgar's expression contorted as he returned to his manor. Because so many things happened at once, not even able to organize their emotions, Lydia didn't know how to open her mouth to speak to him.

His wet hair dripped water droplets. As if he couldn't feel it, he stared straight ahead.

Anger made him even calmer and callous. His pale cheeks were like porcelain, and his eyes were burning.

He had given her his coat, so he must've been very cold. However, she had never seen him behave this way before.

In the end as they were reaching the earl's manor, as they were getting off the

carriage, she tried to say something most ordinarily comforting:

“Raven will surely return to you safely.”

Somehow, Lydia didn't understand why Edgar looked so startled when he finally turned to look at her. Then, he suddenly grasped her hand.

“Your hands are so cold... I've gotten you harmed and through so much suffering, and yet you still worry for me?”

He painfully remained silent, and it seemed it had to do more than just the matter with Raven.

“You're not going anywhere...and if I have you, I can still fight.”

Although Lydia didn't answer, but after hearing his words, she felt her cheeks become feverish. She took this as a sign that her body was warming up.

While in the manor, standing in her dressing room, she was finally about to take off her mud-stained clothes and change into cleaner, close-fitting undergarments. She went to the side of the heater to dry her dripping, wet hair. At the same time, while standing to the side, she took deep breaths.

Prince was indeed pushing harder at Edgar little by little. Ermine returned, but only to allow Edgar's pain to further continue. Moreover, Prince's entourage had now taken Raven away from him as well.

And Lydia didn't know whether she was as important to him as Edgar said she was.

Both Raven and Ermine are gone. Can she really become Edgar's savior?

As she continued to think of all these things for some time, there came a faint sound from nearby.

Lydia immediately turned and found that the closed door had opened a crack.

“Ed... Edgar?”

Normally if it was him, he would openly speak up with sophistry, all dignified and imposing.

But, apart from him, there would have been no one interested in Lydia who was standing in the dressing room.

“.....I'm changing my clothes, do you intend to peep!”

Just as she strengthen her voice to shout, a shadow of a human came from behind and tightly grabbed her, pushing her against the ground.

In her vision was not Edgar's golden blond hair, but jet-black long hair.

Mr. Ulya!

She heard that he had been brought back by one of the members of Scarlet Moon and locked up in his room.

But he was right there. On top of Lydia, covering her mouth with his hands.

"I'm sorry, Miss Carlton. Please do not make a sound. There's something I need to tell you....."

However, Lydia was terrified, so she continued to struggle under him.

"Please listen to me."

"Don't....! Help....."

"I was just used by them."

She was in no mood to listen to him. Fearful and ashamed for wearing nothing else but her undergarments, her mixed feelings made her tears well up even more.

".....Ed....."

She wanted to yell out for help, but she couldn't. If only Ulya could let her make even a peep.

"I don't wish to assault you. I am also a woman."

Eh?

Lydia stopped struggling, and so Ulya slowly opened his hand.

With long hair and a neutral face, it would be no surprise if he was a woman.

The shoulders and waist were also too slender for a man. Ulya had similar skin tone as Raven, and compared to the English men, he was slender and had skin that was rather fine and delicate.

A woman disguised as a man. Because she was always around Ermine, she thought that there was no way that even men's clothing could hide the exquisite curves of a woman. She had since been in such an impression. So to face Ulya now as a woman, seemed a bit unfitting.

However, Ulya's figure was indistinguishable.

Ulya pulled the doubtful Lydia's hand into his coat jacket inside.

Through the thin shirt, Lydia could feel the protruding chest. And then, she finally understood.

Since the other person was a woman as well, her shame disappeared, and Lydia was able to calm down.

“Miss Carlton, I am sorry to deceive you. However, at the time, I was unable to disobey orders.”

I see, Lydia thought.

Because Ulya was the container for Nightmare.

But you could at least still dress as a woman.

“Why do you wish to dress as a man? Was it because women cannot go to University and my father was a professor there In the end, was all this a facade so you could approach me?”

“Those were one of the reasons. However, I am always in disguise. That is our family custom. When the family has no male heirs, the eldest daughter shall be the heir and, until marriage, we are to be in disguise.”

“But, didn’t you become the adopted son of an Englishman?”

“Even though I was born in Bombay, India, it was rumored that my ancestors lived in the mountains of Ceylon island, led by the later generation of the small clan’s leaders. Even if I were English, I also must not lose their native tradition.”

“Ceylon.....? That can’t be. Then, the one who was recently murdered, he was also part of the royal family...”

“Yes, he was. Before the death of my father, he told me of my relatives who had migrated to England. Although I wished to look for them in England, I had little money. I had no one to turn to, and then that was when an old man appeared.”

“An old man?”

“He adopted me and brought me to this country. Not only that, he also helped me return to the country of Ceylon and to the land name Hadiya... It was then when I heard that he was the leader of a very large secretive organization. Although he was American, he had royal blood, and was known as Prince.”

Then, Lydia was reminded of what happened at the London Bridge. She shivered as a chill ran through her body.

It wasn’t the real Prince, but for him to have been so close to her, it made her tremble with fear.

“Even though he did not become the king, he became a Lord and recovered

those ancestral lands for generations to live upon. Today, the English run the mines there. If you are able to buy it, those people's livelihood problems would be resolved. Therefore, he said if I helped him, he would agree to also help me in return. There was one condition though. I had to hand him the green stone, which was my family treasure. But I've been thinking, wouldn't I also become a victim like Mr. Kent after holding the Diopside?"

"Is it a green stone? The size of an almond with symbolic engravings?"

At Lydia's inquiry, Ulya showed an inscrutable expression, as if to say 'How did you know?'

"Yes... .."

"Please tell me then, what was the word that was written?"

On Lydia's palm, Ulya wrote down the ancient Nordic text, NMM.

Nemain --along with Macha and Badb, she was one of the Celtic war goddesses. Lydia thought.

However, the problem she and Ulya had to face was not the Nordic text itself.

Ulya quickly returned to their conversation.

"That man, Prince, didn't only want my gem. He had my body become a vessel to imprison demons, and I could only obey him."

Then, she sat on the floor, grasping Lydia's shoulders with both of her hands.

"Miss Carlton, please help me. The Earl of Ashenbert is competing against Prince for the rival position as the leader, right?"

According to her reasoning, Prince and Edgar completely became two violent factions fully immersed in battle.

"If this continues, I will be treated as a spy. I will be tortured and questioned, and killed to set an example as a warning for others."

Unfortunately, Ulya's fears may not be so exaggerated. And in a sense, Edgar had no mercy for those he thought were enemies.

"I can depend only on you. I hope you will be able to let me escape."

What should I do?

When she hesitated, there came a knock at the door.

Ulya immediately gasped, and Lydia froze.

"Lydia, have you gotten dressed yet?"

It was Edgar.

“Ah, not yet, wait a minute.”

Frantic, she replied quickly.

“Shall I call for a maid to assist you?”

In the beginning, Lydia was firmly determined when she request someone for a change of clothes. She didn't want anyone to see her tattered clothing or the scars on her chest.

But in truth, Edgar had asked her again in order to search for Ulya who escaped. If Ulya was also there, Lydia was probably held hostage.

“No need, it’s fine for now.”

“Really?”

“Yes, thank you.”

Just as her words left her mouth, the door was kicked down.

With her hands on Lydia’s shoulders, Ulya was still holding her breath and had no time to hide at all.

“I felt it was strange. The door was not closed, and if it was like usual, if I greeted Lydia while she was getting dressed, she would be angry as if I had peeped, but surprisingly, she thanked me.”

‘Am I normally that grumpy?’ She thought.

As Edgar approached Ulya, at the same time, he drew out his sword.

Ulya, of course, would not stay there and await her death.

Quickly, she pushed down a small table beside her, using it to avoid Edgar’s sword.

However, Edgar easily skipped over the table and stabbed Ulya.

Lydia screamed in fear. However, the sharp sword had only sliced through her coat sleeve and embedded into the wall.

However, it was too early to feel relieved.

Nailing her, Edgar let go of his sword and kicked Ulya in the knees, so she was absolutely pinned against the wall.

“Stop it-!”

Lydia who, aside from her three overlapping layers of petticoats, wore only her chemise. She had forgotten all about the fact that she was only in her

undergarments as she rushed in front of Edgar.

“Ulya was being used by Prince!”

“He shamed my fiancée. I must tear him to shreds.”

“Wrong, this person is a woman! She hasn’t done anything to me!”

Edgar didn’t release Ulya but stopped his attack. Then, from top to bottom, he looked at her several times and furrowed his eyebrows.

“She's a woman?”

“Yes. I beg you, listen to what she has to say!”

“Is it true?”

He glared at Ulya threateningly and suddenly reached his hand in between her two legs.

“You, what are you doing! Edgar!”

Shocked, Lydia was flushed with shame and cried out. However, his face was calm, and he pulled his sword out from the wall, releasing Ulya.

“I confirmed it. The words of the enemy cannot be believed too easily.”

Ulya, as if she was deflating, slowly sat to the ground where she was.

“So, Lydia, don’t be angry because I was touching another woman.”

Edgar said in a jokingly tone. Though he did not wield his sword, Edgar sharply peered down at Ulya with his eyes.

“It's still not confirmed yet. Miss Ulya, are you a homosexual?”

At the sudden question, Lydia didn’t understand what he was saying. Ulya had a startled expression and shook her head.

“Even though you stole a kiss from Lydia?”

“That was....the Nightmare’s doing against my will.”

“But that was a fact.”

“I only remember a little bit.....”

Edgar, once again, slashed his sword at Ulya and a handful of her black hair fluttered down.

“The hair is compensation for the matter. No man could be so lucky. I was going to stab you to death with my sword.”

He finally put away his sword and lowered his head to look at Lydia.

“Well, Lydia, I still have some things I need to ask her. I'm going to call someone

to escort her to another room. Can hide behind the couch for a moment?"

Lydia, who finally noticed her appearance, hurriedly left Edgar's side and quickly ran to hide behind the couch.

About the same time, Edgar signaled someone from outside the door. The two large twins from the Scarlet Moon appeared at once.

"I'm sorry, Lord Edgar. Because the guards were carelessly absent-minded, he got away."

She had probably used this gap in order to run into the dressing room Lydia was in.

"Please be careful. Also, because this person appears to be a woman, you must handle her accordingly."

He eloquently said "accordingly " the second time in a heavier tone, as if he was insinuating something.

The two members were surprised as they looked at Ulya. But afterwards, they looked at each other and nodded at once.

Watching them take Ulya away, Edgar let out a long sigh. Facing away from the couch where Lydia was hiding, he sat in the armchair next to it.

"I'm sorry.....I let you experience yet another terrible thing."

It sounded as if his heart had sunk deeper in despair.

".....it doesn't matter. I don't blame you."

"I said that I would protect you, but things have still ended up this way."

"I'm fine."

"Really?"

"Um, Edgar, I would like to change my clothes."

Even if she hid, trying to talk to him as she was dressed like that made her nervous.

"I'll go out right now. But answer me, alright? Because Ulya is a woman, is that why you're not upset anymore? Earlier in the rain, you looked as if you were about to fall apart, and I wanted so much to curse myself."

True, to feel at ease just because the other person is of the same gender was still too naive, but to Lydia, it would have been much worse if Ulya was a man.

Originally, young women of upper class society had been educated like that.

Among girls, no matter how close they got or what they do, no one would reprimand them. However, if a girl had a close relationship with a man that was not family, it would be scandal in the eyes of society.

Girls are being repeatedly warned about what not to do with vile men. However, some do not quite understand what would be considered as “bad men.” It is implanted among girls that a casual woman that has lost her purity is to be outcasted and coldly judged by society.

Perhaps, by living in a different family and educated in freer laissez-faire principles, Lydia would be an exception.

To be cautious when approaching the opposite sex, and to never kiss anyone aside the one you're courting. For Lydia, who had neither brothers nor intimate male childhood friends, this was especially true.

All in all, since no one will comment about an intimate kiss between girls, Lydia had already realised the difference between being with the opposite sex and being with the same sex ever since she was a young girl.

It was true that when she and Ulya were close to each other, Lydia felt that she had become impure. But after discovering that Ulya was a woman, that feeling had disappeared...

But suddenly, Lydia felt restless. Would Edgar think she was impure?

“Can’t you forgive me? Because Miss Ulya was Prince’s subordinate, I still feel as though I am a dirty girl..”

“What are you saying? Why would I think that?”

His simple and blunt denial relieved her greatly.

At the same time, at her own words, Lydia was suddenly feeling very shy.

“Well, it's not that. I don't really care what you think of me.....”

Such words clearly indicated that she did mind. Saying anymore to explain herself could only result in her digging her own grave, so she remained silent.

“I’m more worried that you are actually trying to be brave again.”

Edgar stood up. She knew he was looking in her direction, and immediately tensed up.

Of course, he couldn’t see Lydia, who was behind the couch, and she could not see his face, but she knew he was looking this way.

“So, even if you won't take my words to heart, I'll say it in advance. No matter what happens, I will always love you, my fairy.”

Her heart was racing. Her whole body began to feel hot, and she couldn't calm down. Sitting down, Lydia firmly tightened her arms around her knees.

Edgar's tone was not as light as usual but actually quite flat. This made Lydia believe he sounded apathetic.

In reality, he must actually be in a very depressed mood.

“In the future, you may not forgive me. I don't want to ask of you to understand me, but if I were to hide this from you anymore, it would only hurt later on.”

His words were unnerving.

“....what is it?”

“I'm afraid you won't see Ulya again.”

To say that....

Even after forcing her to say all those things and inquire about all that she knew, he didn't even intend to let her live?

“No, don't, don't Edgar, please let Miss Ulya go!”

Lydia thoughtlessly rushed out from behind the couch.

“She was only forced to follow Prince's orders.”

“I don't know what she said to you, but only those that are the most closest to Prince can move freely without restraints.”

“It was because of the Nightmare. She was only obeying orders.”

“Is that so? I can only see her as a threat to me, starting from the moment we met the first time.”

“But please, don't kill her!”

She begged him, grasping onto his arm. She paid no attention to the fact that she was the first to take the initiative to touch him. And when he stroked her hair, she was startled.

“Are you going to look down on me if I do?”

He frowned with a lonely expression.

Look down on him?

For Lydia, these words were the complete opposite of how she felt for him deep down inside.

“Even so, you are my only hope. If you still have a little bit of sympathy left for me, before that fades, don’t ever leave me.”

Lydia knew he was the kind of man to do cruel things. However, she also knew it was due to that fact that he had to face Prince and his organization in the most relentless and violent battles. Many of his comrades were murdered by Prince in the crueller ways. Knowing that, there was no way Lydia could judge Edgar’s intentions as sinful.

I could never look down on him.

Even if she didn’t understand him, she worked together with them to solve their hardships. Struggling together made her understand that, when Edgar was in battle, he was truly a leader at all times.

He could only go by his own wisdom and strength. Any other virtues could not protect him or his companions.

If he was like Lydia, dictated by pity and compassion, Edgar would have lost everything a long time ago.

“I cannot stop you from what you do. I can only try to help you until the very end. However, I hope that, when you do such painful and cruel things, you won't try to keep so much composure. I hope that you don't have to give up your own conscience.”

As she spoke, she tightened her grip on his arm with more strength. In order to calm her down, he hugged her shoulders.

Her no-touching agreement was already broken by the both of them. However, Lydia did not let go of her own hand.

Lydia truly meant what she said. And, she knew, no matter what he did, she would never leave him.

Long ago, she had already noticed that.

She realized that she liked Edgar.

There was no need for the nightmare to show her in the dream. She would have wanted to become Edgar's most special girl regardless.

Therefore, she would never give up. She didn't wish for him to become Prince.

“I'll be there by your side. So please, before you harm others, think a little more about it. If the purpose of Prince is to take everything away from you and to let

you despair, at least you still have me. I'm not going anywhere, I won't let you despair. So..."

"Marry me, won't you?"

"....."

I like him, and because of that, I'm scared.

If I accept Edgar's proposal, then I would certainly hope I can be the one you love the most. But if you still have a little love for 'her,' I cannot bear it.

Even though Lydia understood, that it was a place within his heart she was not allowed to enter, it would only become more painful for her to bear.

For Edgar, there are only two types of women. Is it Ermine or a fleeting lover?

It was only a dream the nightmare shown her, but perhaps it was also reality.

If this was the case, then could she really marry this man?

"You're obviously worried about me, but you can't marry me?"

Her feelings were too complex, too difficult for her to convey to him.

Lydia became silent. She had summoned up all her courage to say those words already. And before she knew it, they were belittled by Edgar's easy-going manner.

"Lydia, in that case, you gave me a little too much excitement. Although I neither drank nor took any pills, it seems now I may have reached the limit of my patience."

.... ... She was wearing only her undergarments.

But Edgar held her tightly. His arms firmly pulled Lydia, pressing her body closer to his.

"Well, then, would you let me go?"

Lydia anxiously wanted to leave him, but--

"That's too bad, I can't seem to do it."

"What...that's not possible..."

"Hit me."

"Eh?"

"If you don't do this, I cannot stop."

His fingers brushed her cheek, gently raising her chin up.

"Otherwise..." Edgar continued.

Before Edgar finished speaking, she subconsciously slapped him.



“Lord Edgar, what happened to you?”

The first to ask about the red handprint that marked Edgar's face was Paul, who had just entered the study room.

Butler Tompkins, Jack and Louis guessed what must have happened to Edgar and pretended not to see. However Paul, who was too naive, had not noticed their intentions.

“This is the mark of the most passionate love.”

“Ah, yes, but.....”

“I didn't expect her to be able to hit so hard.”

It was only because she was so cute, so unwilling to let go, that Edgar wanted to tease her a little bit.

“I made the wrong choice. I should not have told her to ‘hit me’.”

“Is that true?”

“Paul, you should also try letting your beloved woman hit you, because such cold practices rather make for a more exciting experience. I clearly should not tease her, but I’m always asking for trouble.”

Edgar looked at the astonished Paul and smiled, while rising from his chair.

“Yes, do you have any new information?”

Paul’s original purpose to see Edgar was to actually report new findings.

As Paul thought of this, confused by their initial discussion, he quickly amended his attitude.

“Ah, yes, there is new information. We have found Mr. Kent’s widow.”

“Really? Where is she now?”

“I brought her here. Anyway, most likely, she would have been the next target, so I convinced her to accept the Earl's protection.”

“Demons (Evil spirits)? In other words, she believes her husband was killed by demons?”

“Well, that is what she seems to believe. In fact, for the cases at the London

Bridge, the nightmares may actually be partly to blame.”

Mr. Kent’s wife definitely must have been aware of some important matters.

“Please let Lydia see her too. She would most likely discuss about the ancient Nordic text of the Celtic goddesses.”

Lydia changed her clothes, in accordance to Tompkins’s instructions, and walked toward the living room.

She had heard the holder of the Diopside stone, the one with the engravings 'Macha', was Mr. Kent’s wife, who was brought in by Paul.

When she arrived, Paul and Edgar were already in the room.

Soon, Mr. Kent’s wife was led in by Tompkins and appeared as well.

Her face was pale and thin. However, she had just finished her mourning and was properly presentable. She, at the least, did not appear unpleasant.

Giving a slight courtesy, she looked over to Edgar and in a soft voice said:

“You are the Blue Knight Earl.”

The widow still seemed fearful, as she spoke with her eyes nervously looking around.

“Do you really wish to protect me from the hands of that terrible thing?”

“Madam, you really have nothing to worry, because we have an excellent fairy doctor.”

Though she took a glance at Lydia, her expression remained uneasy.

“In fact, I was hesitant to come here. My husband was murdered by the demons, but no one would believe me. I heard that you inherited the name of the Fairy Earl, but my husband once told me the new earl was an imposter....I’m sorry, to say something so rude...”

“I won’t mind in the least, so say what you want to say.”

“The blood of the Blue Knight Earl has been cut off 100 years ago. This is sure to be true.”

That was indeed a fact. She must have also known that because the Hadiya’s royal family was in contact with the earl one hundred years ago as well.

Lydia sent a knowing look to Edgar.

Probably thinking the same, he glanced back at her and nodded his head.

In any case, there was finally a connection between Mr. Kent’s holdings of the

Ceylon's Diopside, and the England's legend of Celtic goddesses. The carving of the goddess' name was clearly England's legend and its fairy.

If the one who was involved in this was the Blue Knight Earl from 100 years ago, then it would all makes sense.

"One hundred years ago, one of my ancestors was named Lady Gladys Ashenbert. She made an agreement with your husband's ancestors. Due to that agreement, we think that, as of now, the Hadiya royal family's engraved Diopside and the recent incidents could be related. Did your husband consider this possibility?"

Edgar, who was just as anxious as Lydia, merely deduced this idea. Even so, he spoke as if he was already aware of the entire situation ever since the beginning.

"At the time, Lady Gladys' purpose was to resolve all the crisis triggered by the dark fairies in England, and therefore she traveled throughout the country.

The Diopside played a key role in her battle. Although she did sacrifice her life in battle, the Earl's bloodline was not broken off."

Listening to him say all of this, the madam's doubts of him vanished right away. He must have already planned this out beforehand.

"For you to even know all these things, you must be the Blue Knight Earl...."

Her face had indeed changed to be more at ease.

"Had I consulted with you earlier, my husband may not have been killed. Because my husband believed the true Earl was gone, he hid his origins and name. It was in order to avoid the evil hands of the enemy and protect the stone."

"You have said that the organization was an opponent Miss Gladys fought with..." Edgar verified.

That was Prince's organization.

"I believe so. If all three stones were in the organization's hands, then a terrible calamity would occur. Those were the Blue Knight Earl's last words."

"This so-called terrible calamity meaning...?"

"I do not know the specific details. However, I have heard that the Diopsides swore allegiance to the Hadiya royal family who held the demon's powers. If

those outside the family held the three stones together, there would be no meaning to its essence anymore. Despite this, it is possible for it to also be abused by the members of the royal family.”

“Or perhaps, there are people who wish to wage war by resurrecting the war goddess.”

Lydia suddenly added.

“Because, Edgar, although she was a dark fairy, the goddess of war, Badb, had surely wished for her allies to succeed in war. If Prince was unable to return to England after King James's defeat, it's impossible for him not to want her by his side.”

“If this were the case, then Lady Gladys would most certainly not give the goddess to Prince.”

It was said 100 years ago during the Highland War, the Prince of Calamity had rose from the battle’s flowing blood, that had been bewitched by black magic.

It had become an unprecedented tragic battle in the Scottish Highlands. King James III’s son, Prince Charles, had been defeated by King Edward I. However, many of the prince's supporters were residents of Scotland and Ireland. Therefore, the legend of ancient gods and fairies remained strongly true to the people there.

Perhaps because they were rivals to the royal family, the descendants vowed to take revenge. In an attempt to use some kind of incantation, they had used the spilled blood from the battlefield in order to revive the long-forgotten ancient goddess. If this was 100 years ago in the Scottish Highlands, there should have been many people who knew of the demon’s magic. Including those who abused that power.

“The dark fairies began to have more vitality and enhanced strength. Once Lady Gladys noticed this change, she immediately intended to suppress their power at all cost. For this though, she needed a stronger power to equally compete with it.”

“Therefore, she decided to use Ceylon’s power of the Diopside which contained the demon’s magic?” Asked the widow.

“Yes. However, it was still Hadiya’s royal treasure. Regardless of the close

relationship between the Hadiya's royal family and the Blue Knight Earl during ancient times, it should not have been able to be used in England. Would you care to explain this, Madam?"

The woman answered Edgar's question truthfully:

"As the settlement of colonies progressed, the family lost their lands and became displaced. From my husband's great-grandfather, I have heard that the Blue Knight Earl, coming from England, came to aid them and therefore settled there. In return, as a gift from their friendship, he did not hesitate to lend the Earl the power of the gemstones."

"...and Lady Gladys Ashenbert had sealed the resurrected goddess inside of those gemstones. She did not hesitate to sacrifice her life for it."

Prince, born from the incantations, and his supporters were weakened in strength where they were then expelled from England by Lady Gladys.

However, he was not killed. Instead, his descendants inherited his position as Prince, with the intent to kill all of Blue Knight Earl's blood and take away Lady Gladys's goddess.

"But two of the three Diopside pieces had already fallen to the enemy's hands. Mr. Kent's and Miss Ulya's."

Edgar nodded in agreement.

"The last one is Morrigan. She is the strongest goddess of all three."

"So, by gathering all the three stones, the goddess will be resurrected?"

With the way things seemed to appear, perhaps England will once again fall into chaos, and become just like the battlefield 100 years ago.

As of now, the third stone of the Diopside was in the hands of one person. Either the Hadiya's royal family or a completely neutral party...

Prince was searching for it while watching Raven as well.

Ermine said that if Raven touched the Diopside, he would no longer obey Edgar. Hadiya was the place where the subordinates of the sealed demon king reside. If so, the overflowing power of the Diopside would reduce its holder to become subordinates of their sprites, regardless of their own will. Eventually, Raven would become a servant of the Hadiya royal family, forced to obey the demon king.

Perhaps there were other members of the royal family. If they were under the hands of Prince like Ulya and had taken Raven, what should they do?

Perhaps Edgar would not only have to hand Ermine to the enemy, but Raven as well.

“Madam, do you know the location for the other piece of the Diopside?”

Edgar questioned her again.

“I have not heard anything. Originally, since the loss of their home, my husband’s family was the only one to inherit one piece of the Diopside. Even with the Blue Knight Earl, it was a mystery as to how Lady Gladys obtained all three pieces of the stone. However, my husband did sense something strange in the Diopside. He felt as if the dark spirit trapped in the stone was waiting for a chance to attack him.”

Mr. Kent was similar to Ulya. They had a strong resistance to the magic and had a sharp sense to it.

“Unfortunately, his worries turned out to be true. Am I not also being watched?” She worryingly asked.

“I think, as of now, there should be no reason for an attack against you. Having said that, you, madam, are part of the lineage strongly tied with the Ashenbert family. Therefore, I will keep you safe.”

Edgar said as he looked at Paul.

“You basically understand, correct? Please report to the Scarlet Moon and bring the madam to the Wellman Hotel.”

The hotel was owned by Edgar so several members of the Scarlet Moon were already guarding there. The place should be well secured, so there was no danger detected at the moment.

Paul nodded and led Mrs. Kent out the door.

When he returned, he looked at Edgar with a worried expression.

“Lord Edgar, there are even less people guarding you than before, right? If you need a skilled entourage --- though there is certainly no one compared to Raven, there are some credible candidates you can look into.”

With Raven gone, Lydia also believed that some of the guards were unreliable. However, Edgar only shook his head.

“My only entourage is Raven. I can protect myself.”

Even if he lost his will, Raven should still continue to protect Edgar if he appeared before him. Edgar was determined to make Raven admit that he was his only master.

Though Edgar said that if he had Lydia by his side, he could continue to fight. However, the one person he truly did not want to lose was Raven.

Raven must be saved. Lydia watched as Paul left and then came up with a grand idea.

“Where will Raven be taken to? Prince’s hiding place?”

“When I tried to ask Ulya, she didn’t say anything beyond the details of her own life. She held back details regarding that man and his henchman, so she must have had strict training.”

Then, by displaying herself as a victim in front of Lydia, was that all just an act? Edgar, taking a look at Lydia, then added:

“I have not done anything to her.”

“Well, do you want to know where Raven is?”

Suddenly, there came a voice from out of the window.

In the form of a handsome, young man was Kelpie, who was already sitting at the frame of the window. It was unknown when he arrived.

With a fearless smile on his face, he gave a challenging look to Edgar.

“Kelpie, do you know?”

Lydia walked up towards him without thinking, but Edgar pulled back by hand.

“You are not going to tell me so easily like that, are you?”

“Of course not.”

“Get the hell out. I don't wish to give you anything.”

Based on their previous experiences, Kelpie most certainly wanted Lydia back. But unexpectedly, Kelpie spoke of different words this time:

“Give the container of the nightmare to me.”

“... Ulya?”

Edgar was surprised.

“I can’t leave the Nightmares alone. It will certainly remember the taste of Lydia’s blood.”

Lydia, placing her hand near her chest that was near the wound, unconsciously remembered Ulya's attack on her with the Nightmare.

"Then, will it be targeting Lydia?"

"Yes, so give the Nightmare's cage to me."

"Kelpie, Ulysses commanded you to do this, right?"

Hearing Ulysses's name, Kelpie seemed to frown in disgust.

"Don't be ridiculous. How can I be commanded by that boy? I'm trying to think of a way to get revenge on that bastard for deceiving me. So, because of that Earl, it'll become problematic for you since you won't be able to protect Lydia against Nightmare's power."

Poked at a sore spot, Edgar's heart flared in anger. Even though he became impatient, he still cautiously asked:

"If I give you Ulya, would you tell me where Raven is located at?"

"Yeah. If you take the foreigner out from here, I will tell you where that Raven is at. However, before the Nightmare comes out from again, you need to hand Lydia over to me for protection. Only until the nightmare can longer touch her."

Having heard this, Edgar snapped in anger and grabbed his sword.

"Did you expect Lydia to go with you? Disappear from my sight!"

"Wait, Edgar."

Lydia stopped him.

"To save Raven, you need Kelpie's knowledge. I'll be back soon. Kelpie doesn't lie."

"Lydia, it doesn't have to be a lie or a deceit in order to conceal the truth."

"It will be no problem. I am a fairy doctor. I'm very good at negotiating with fairies."

Although she knew she was only a novice and inexperienced, in this case, she had to say it.

"No."

"We must save Raven."

"We will find him ourselves."

"If Nightmare runs loose again, it can affect Raven. And besides, Kelpie will never harm me."

“But he wants to take you away from me.”

“I’m not anyone’s possession.”

With that, she ended the conversation.

Lydia believed this was the most valuable thing she could do for Edgar, and so she voluntarily accepted the deal.

However, hearing her remarks made Edgar feel he was rejected by her. Therefore, he painfully knitted his eyebrows.

But, Lydia was determined in her decision. His hand that grasped hers, weakened its grip.

“Edgar, wait for me.”

With no time to hesitate, Lydia approached Kelpie who extended his arm to hold her.

And then at once, he transformed to a dark water horse.

Then, Lydia felt as if she was swimming lightly, floating in the air as she sat on his back.

“Lydia!”

With a gust of strong winds, Kelpie flew out the window.

She grabbed onto his mane and closed her eyes, only hearing the sound of Edgar’s voice in her ears.

“Do you want to leave me alone?”

Lydia suddenly felt somewhat uneasy.

She told him she would stay by his side. She said that, even though Raven was gone, she would save him from his despair.

A brief parting should be fine, right?

It’s alright. There’s Mr. Paul and the rest of the Scarlet Moon members with him, so Edgar is not alone.

Or so Lydia tried to convince herself.

Chapter 5 - Unyielding Desire

Kelpie brought Lydia to a cottage by the river.

As it was already pretty late when they arrived at the place , it was dark all around, and they couldn't see anything. After Kelpie left, Lydia nearly fell asleep as laid on a bench, listening to the sounds of flowing water and the creaking rhythm of a wheel.

When she woke up, the flames in the fireplace was started. No wonder it didn't feel cold at all in here. However, Kelpie should not have been able to start the fire, so who did?

She wiped away the soot that caught on the windowpane thanks to the smoke of the fire, and looked outside from it. It was dawn, and there was a white, smoke-like mist filling the horizon. The small bridge of the river and the surrounding trees could only be seen dimly. Thanks to that, the bridge and the trees across the river appeared hazy and flickering, almost as if they were illusions.

She opened the window and leaned her body forward, over the frame. Despite taking a closer look, the other side of the bridge was obscured by the trees and the fog. She couldn't see anything distinguishable, no houses or anything.

However, the lamp in the cottage had a trademark label that was the same as the one Lydia had at home. Therefore, they must not be in the fairy realm but the human world still.

She looked down at her hands. The moonstone on Edgar's engagement ring was exuding light from her ring finger. The original owner of the moonlight stone was the guardian fairy of the first generation Blue Knight Earl, who was also his wife.

Only Edgar can remove the ring. That was why Kelpie could not ignore Lydia's will and take her to the fairy world at the time.

If this was the human world, then they shouldn't be too far away from London.

Did Edgar let Ulya go yet?

Then, a loud, pathetic voice interrupted her train of thought.

"Lydia..... Hey....."

She looked around the cottage, but she didn't see anyone.

"Lydia --- help me."

She turned to the direction of the sound, carefully searching the opposite of the ladder in the middle of the room. And ...

"Nico! Hey, what are you doing here?"

Tied to a pole was a grey fairy cat. He had a look of anger, as he glared at Lydia.

"I've been calling you this whole time. How could you not have heard me? Kelpie, that bastard, he actually had the nerve to tie me up tight in here!"

Lydia hastily apologized, as she untied the knot around him.

"How did you even....were you caught by Kelpie?"

"God knows why. In the middle of the night, he suddenly broke in and grabbed me while I was sleeping. Before I knew it, he took me to this place. Then, he made me use a match to start a fire. Originally, it was my idea so now he's letting me stay here for the time being. Despite that, he still tied me tightly on the pole."

Even though Nico was a fairy, he was able to use a match. Therefore, Kelpie made use of him.

Nico unraveled the rest of the straw rope and quickly groomed his messy fur.

"Lydia, why on earth would you want to run away together with Kelpie? The earl was so lost."

A sharp pain pierced her chest.

"Thanks to you, he caught me last night and went as far as to get me in his bed.

Sometimes, he really seems like such a child. I really hope he could be more serious.”

Though Nico complained, he didn’t show an attitude full of outrage.

“However, recently, the relationship between both of you has gotten better,” Lydia commented offhandedly.

“Eh? To whom do you think I’m getting along with him for?”

He looked surprised, with his hands on his hips as he looked up at Lydia.

“Oh, it is true. I really had no idea how hard it was going to be.”

“Ah...?”

“Hey, what is it? Are you tempted by the earl?”

“You... what are you talking about...For that man who likes to play around with women?”

“I say, I have been around you since you were born. Late one night, you snuck out. I don’t know what happened, but not long after, you came back in tears saying he called out another woman’s name. And then the very next day, you hurriedly rode back on a carriage to visit him. Even a fool can see it.”

Lydia bowed her head as her face began to redden.

“If it wasn’t for this, how could I ever be close to that kind of arrogant guy who treats me like a cat.”

Well, it may not be good to say, but I’m afraid the black tea and snacks also play a considerable role for you.

She quickly peeked at him with one eye. Feeling cocky, Nico strutted his head back.

“Anyway, other than this, Nico, what is Kelpie planning on doing?”

Because he thought Lydia was feeling very embarrassed, he turned his head away to one side and changed the subject.

“I don't know. At any rate, let’s try to head back since the horse is away.”

Just as he turned around, he found that Kelpie had been standing right behind him.

“I’m not a horse, you cat.”

Suddenly Kelpie appeared and kicked Nico with his foot.

Nico “meowed” aloud pitifully as he rapidly spun in the air a couple of times

before landing on top of a shelf.

“What are you doing!”

Nico was so angry, that all of his hair stood up on his back. However, Kelpie ignored Nico’s threatening glare.

“Lydia, eat breakfast. You hungry?”

As he spoke, he threw a loaf of bread and a few pieces of cheese onto Lydia’s lap.

“It’s not stolen, I traded with wild ducks to get it. You can’t swallow a wild duck whole, right?”

It seemed like he wanted to show Lydia that he put in a lot of effort for her.

To this, she did feel really grateful. And had he dropped dead wild ducks on her lap, she really would feel quite upset.

“Hey, what about me?” Nico said, unsatisfied.

“Eh? You can figure that out for yourself.”

“You tied me up and threw me in here. You think about it!”

“Nico, I will share half of mine with you.”

“But, isn’t that not the problem? This guy’s condescending attitude really irks me.....”

Nico, who became angry, stamped his paws. Then, Kelpie swiftly grabbed Nico and lifted him up. Nico immediately lost his bold strength and shrunk into a ball.



"And what are you doing? Hey, let me go, I don't taste delicious at all."

"Wait, Kelpie, please stop."

"I don't want to eat this diseased cat. Listen up. You're the only fairy who takes orders from the fake Blue Knight Earl. So, you reeking cat, inform my message to that guy: That Raven boy is in the nearby the private homes in London, the west side of the station. It's the house with a red roof and a smoking, black chimney. In front, there's a basin of daisies. You have to go now."

With that said, he threw the cat out the window.

“Nico! What are you doing, Kelpie!”

Kelpie grabbed her, which made her suddenly feel uneasy.

He said that if he got Ulya, he will say where Raven was located. As Lydia thought that, after he confirmed the Nightmare in Ulya’s body, they would return back to Edgar with Raven’s location. However, Kelpie only sent Nico as a messenger. So, he didn't intend to seal the Nightmare nor have her return back to London.

“Kelpie, I want to go back to London.”

“You don't have to worry.”

Kelpie stood in front of the only doorway, blocking the way.

“What about the Nightmare?”

“Well, it ate a lot. And, along with the strong magic in Raven’s body, the Nightmare has grown considerably and can no longer fit in the human body. For the time being, it’s being kept all tied up at the London Bridge. The bridge was used to ward off enemies like that a long time ago, right? Anyway, that guy Ulysses tied the Nightmare over there so it would continue to grow. It is indeed a place that can draw out magic since people often come and go, and that can provide sufficient amount of bait for the Nightmare.”

So, this was what Kelpie intended to do. He already knew that Ulya could no longer cage the Nightmare again.

“Therefore, Lydia, don’t go near the bridge.”

But, he also gave his word to Edgar.

“So....why did you ask for Miss Ulya?”

“Because I couldn't trade for you in the deal. You wouldn't have come with me if I hadn't said that. Since you’re safe here with me, and because you’re not close to Ulya’s body which holds the Nightmare, you don’t have to return to the earl anymore.”

“You....deceived me?”

She forcefully tried to pushed him to move, but he didn’t budge.

“I have always been deceived, Lydia. Not only by allowing you and that Earl to get engaged, but I was also deceived by Ulysses too. So, I’ve reconsidered my

ways on how cooperate with humans.”

It was just as Edgar said. You don’t have to lie in order to deceive, as long as it’s concealing the truth.

What is going on with me?

In the end, I still couldn’t see the truth.

Even though I clearly know this, I am always doubtful to the one I most want to believe.

I couldn't completely trust him, nor could I possibly tell him my feelings. I clearly agreed to stay with him, and yet I left him. I’m always afraid of getting hurt, but I constantly hurt him.'

“You must step aside, Kelpie. I must go back home!”

Kelpie was tall, built and nearly perfect. Even so, Lydia beat at his chest, but he remained completely indifferent to her.

Rather, Lydia’s hand began to hurt. Kelpie, worried that her slender fingers would swell up, took both of her hands in his to stop her.

“Do you hate me?”

“That is not the case. But, please ...”

“Please, I only want to protect you.”

He was actually pleading to her, which left Lydia at a loss as to what to do.

“The earl’s enemy is not an ordinary man. I should also say, he is not too good. It may be because he emitted dark fairy magic despite having the attitude of a human. No, although he is a human, I can feel that he has intense and endless resentment.”

It was difficult for Lydia to understand Kelpie’s suspicions. However, it was possible to imagine where the resentment came from. It must have been his expulsion from England, as well as the result of the war and the persecution of all his followers.

“Did you see Prince?” She asked.

“At a glance.”

“Like Ulysses, can he also use the fairy’s power?”

“It’s hard to say. For the negotiations with fairies, he seems to entirely rely on

Ulysses to handle. But, even without that power, his very existence radiates a dangerous atmosphere. He had a strong, dark aura. How to say this. It was similar to the Earl, who has certain traits that attract people. Where people in this country would undoubtedly respect him as long as he is of royal lineage. It is this kind of power that can influence the fate of others. In particular, Prince attracts feelings of hatred and destructive desires.”

This was intended to make Edgar fall into despair, let his mind flooded with detrimental feelings and Prince’s domination. And he didn't plan on changing his ways so far either. He intended to slowly torture Edgar until the very end.

She could not leave him.

He told her before: “You’re not going anywhere.” When he asked if she looked down on him, he gave her such lonesome expression.

Normally, around Paul, Tompkins, and everyone else he was familiar with, he would be his flippant, arrogant self. However, Lydia knew that, even with Raven taken away from him, he did not want to lose hope in order to support himself. Edgar had only exposed his weaknesses in front of Lydia alone.

It may have only been because her position was already at a place where his trust was a subtle difference from a companion. Even if that was so, she didn’t hate Edgar.

In her mind, even an ordinary girl like herself was able to understand him. The thought of him also being an ordinary young man in his early twenties, was the reason she felt that she could help him.

Even with this alone, staying by his side was valuable to him.

“....I want to go back.”

Lydia lowered her head as she squeezed the words from her lips.

Kelpie was worried about her. She fully understood that. However, she couldn’t stay here.

“Do you like the earl?”

Even though it wasn’t as strong as Ermine, Lydia liked him in her own way.

“But, would that guy take care of you?”

That could only be determined by Edgar’s heart.

She felt that, no matter where he was, she wanted to go back and be with him. “Kelpie, you will not feel the pain of loneliness. Fairies and humans are different.”

“If being lonely makes it painful for you, then I will never let you feel that way.” He protested.

“No, it's not like that. It is only when other people can help you heal your loneliness that they are able to get rid of the pain in their hearts.”

It was until she met Edgar did Lydia realize that she had missed out on the joy of being needed. Because she has always had fairies with her, she always felt that she wasn't alone.

Though she was never really alone, she couldn't imagine being someone else's consolation and savior. She wasn't even sure if she was enough to bring a sense of fulfillment to anyone.

She had always lived with such a mentality and felt that she should not let her guard down around him, no matter what. But as she thought that, in the end, she had only fallen in love with him. Even though he would boldly touch her, speak to her with frivolous words and gazed at her as if it made him so happy. When he was hurt, he needed Lydia. He said that as long as she was there, he could continue to fight.

“Therefore, I want to stay with Edgar.”

“You'll be killed.”

“I want to save Raven with him.”

“I don't know whether it's a snake or a bird-like monster in that kid, but it doesn't have anything to do with you.”

“He's my friend.”

“Not now.”

With magic emitting from his black, pearl-like eyes, he gazed at Lydia.

A Kelpie's nature can be very misleading to people. It was their magical charm that stopped people from thinking in order to lure them into the water and eat them. It was the natural force of water horses.

Then, Lydia felt her strength gradually disappearing. In fact, she felt

lightheaded.

Kelpie was no longer hesitating to use his full magic. Therefore, it seemed the moonstone's protection no longer seemed to be effective.

In order to limit Kelpie's actions, Lydia and Edgar only half-heartedly exchanged marriage vows. Although it was an obstacle to take her to the fairy realm, he never intended to let her return to Edgar. Therefore, his black pearl eyes were glinting at her with strong determination.

Kelpie stretched out his arms and held Lydia.

As if floating in calm, tranquil waters, she lost consciousness.



Raven was near the London Bridge.

After receiving the message from Nico, Edgar immediately found that there were problems in the nearby houses. He therefore sent his men to closely survey the area.

On the other side of the London bridge, across the city, there was an elevated railway that linked to the station. Leaving the road before turning West, one could see the filthy landscape.

Several tall, slender private houses were lined up side-by-side. The features of the area that Kelpie told to Nico were exactly the same.

Edgar was investigating at the same time and had learned that Kelpie imprisoned Lydia in the cottage. But by the time he arrived, the cottage was found empty.

At dawn that morning, he took a carriage at an intersection, confirming the distinct four-story building, narrow and standing upright.

Then, Edgar, while waiting for his men's underlying report, was thinking about Nico's words.

'Because it is Kelpie, it is likely a place near water.'

Just knowing that it was the water's edge made it impossible to start searching. Therefore, Edgar resisted the urge to run around and search for her on impulse. Instead, he remained waiting there.

Raven's dangerous situation was a more urgent matter for him.

At least Kelpie wouldn't hurt Lydia. Whereas for Raven, there was a chance he would've been murdered by the capricious Prince becoming erratic.

Prince wished to study Raven's abilities and the secrets to his sprite. Therefore, he would not easily kill Raven. Edgar, despite taking all of it into account, did not know how to fight against those two on his own. Especially the case with Raven.

"Blue Knight Earl! Thank you for waiting!"

Interrupting his train of thought, Edgar didn't know where the voice came from. From the window, the leaves gently fluttered inside, unnaturally moving to the carriage seat.

Although Edgar could hear him, he couldn't see him. This was the goblin's way of showing Edgar where he was.

Edgar couldn't understand what was going on. There were fairies like Nico and Kelpie that anyone could see. But then, there were fairies that were invisible to people, such as the goblins.

However, Edgar himself was the Blue Knight Earl who did not have the ability to see fairies. Coblynau didn't seem to mind though.

"Fortunately, I've caught up to the earl. I heard that you were preparing for battle, so I immediately rushed here."

The problem with goblins is that their values may still strongly remain in the medieval times.

"What's the matter, Coblynau?"

Edgar picked up the leaves in his hand. He didn't know if Coblynau was there but looked down in that direction, waiting for him to answer.

"In fact, our goblin family completed the creation of the Earl's armor."

"The armor? What? That kind of thing in this day and age....."

Coblynau, in Edgar's hand, was holding something like a silver coin.

"This is?"

"The armor."

He spoke with great confidence in his voice.

"This is yours?"

"No, it is the Earl's. Please use it."

“.....Well, thank you.”

“Oh, from now on, Earl, you and Miss Lydia must start making plans to get married as well. Once you two forge a formal marriage, the power of the moonstone will also strengthen. It will no longer allow for any opportunities as to when the water horse could interfere.”

He would have done so if it wasn't so difficult.

Depressed, Edgar ignored the remaining words of the goblin, whose leaves gently drifted away out the window.

Perhaps, Coblynau also went away with them.

Appearing in the window instead were the twins from the Scarlett Moon.

“Lord Edgar, there is still no one inside. No sign of a fire or light.”

People had already begun to get out of bed, one after another as one could see the smoke emitting from the chimneys of several houses nearby. After the curtains were drawn, revealing the lights, the place was full of life. However, the problem with the house did not change.

“We attempted to pretend to sell items as we rang the doorbell, but no one came to the door.”

Listening to Jack and Louis' report, Edgar placed the “armor” in his coat pocket, taking it into account.

Had Raven already been moved to another place?

“Last night, Ulya disappeared in this area, didn't she?”

Yesterday, in order to fulfill Kelpie's condition, Edgar slightly eased the security in order to give her a chance to escape.

She may have suspected whether it was intentionally done, since it was probably possible that they could track her as well. Therefore, she had fled to the London Bridge. As she crossed the bridge, she made a turn to the West and suddenly vanished without a trace.

If there was a hiding place of the Prince's organization, then Ulya may have escaped into it.

If that was the case, she might just be holding her breath and hiding inside.

In front of the family's door were decorated potted plants on the windowsill. It didn't appear to look like a secret base. Rather, it looked exactly like a plain,

ordinary home. The vibrant flowers were planted in the pots, as if a maid was going to come out soon to sweep the floor.

“Do you wish to break in, Lord Edgar?”

“Here comes new intelligence.”

He looked away as he spoke. It was morning, and the morning mist had yet to fade away. There was almost no one else around. However, his eyes rested at a carriage. Approaching near by was a fat man with a black beard who pulled out.

“Earl, I have kept you waiting long enough. I’ve already inquired about the predicament regarding the residents in this home.”

He was the leader of the organisation named Scarlett Moon, Slade.

He handed over a note, which Edgar quickly read.

The family name here was called Webster. Overseeing the former employees of the railway station, Mr. Webster had retired and the old couple were living together. He frequently went to pubs, and recently, he mentioned that his brother had adopted a son from India.

“.....Prince and Ulya.”

Edgar murmured, as he read.

If this was the case, the old couple were probably under Prince’s hands. Or, did Prince murder Mr. Webster’s real brother and impersonated him?

It was possible since, in the past, Ulysses had impersonated other people’s relatives to sneak into England before. Perhaps they used the same approach.

Because of his large burn on his face, which was wrapped with a bandage, the true brother would not be falsely mistaken if seen.

“When the one from India returned, he paid the couple to go travel on a small trip. Mr. Webster was telling the bar owner that, because he would not be home, he would not be visiting the pub for a while. This was said to have occurred two weeks ago.”

“Therefore, in order to go into hiding, they let the couple go?”

“That’s really good.”

Having heard this, Edgar resisted wrinkling his brows.

He felt a foreboding feeling in his heart and tragic scenes came to mind. However, for the moment, he tried not to heavily think about it and

dismounted from the carriage.

With the Earl's family heirloom, the Merrow's sword at his side, Edgar raised his head.

He didn't know whether it would come in handy, for he lacked the ability to fight against magic. However, it at least had the effect of warding off evil fairies. Of course, if his opponent was a human, then it was also a rather useful weapon as well.

"Go in and look inside." Edgar said.

Slade, confused, then asked him.

"Lord Edgar, where are you going in?"

"In through the window. I must break the glass first, shouldn't I?"

"You wish to go in for yourself?"

"Is there a problem?"

"Well, it's natural that our leader is the one who is Earl. If you do this kind of act that appears almost as if you are thieving, the people may be affected by this ..."

"In what section of the law states that a noble cannot enter through a window?"

"That may be so. However, there are legal provisions that suggest you cannot freely enter people's private residences."

"Slade, although you are a righteous thief, you are still nonetheless a thief. Therefore, why should you care for the law?"

"Nevertheless, in an event that the thief was caught, not only would they be sent to prison, but also subjected to ridicule. Especially for nobles who trespass civilian homes."

Slade often detested Edgar's independent, strategic approaches, but he had not the time to argue there.

"Well, I used to sneak into women's homes, but I have never been caught before."

He signaled Jack and Louis, motioning them to keep up as they moved toward the building.

"But this woman is an old woman!"

“Well then, I’ll just assume that I had mistaken her house for the neighbor’s.”

Slade was stunned. He seemed to be at a loss for words and was then in no mood for a rebuttal. So, Edgar continued:

“Slade, send two people from the back door. Then, arrange the guards outside. Their authority goes to you.”

“There’s no one living in the house next door at all.”

Vexed, Slade dropped this sentence and began commanding the men around them.

In any case, if Raven was in there, Edgar wanted to go in personally.

They sneaked into an empty bedroom on the second floor. After carefully inspecting the room, they found it was indeed a merely empty room.

“There may be a hidden room. Let’s just have a good look.”

“Understood.”

One of the men answered. Edgar wasn’t sure if it was Jack or Louis. Then, at this point, another man shouted from above the steps:

“In the attic, there’s Webster and his wife!”

When Edgar ran over, after seeing the two dead bodies, he sighed.

Though he predicted something like this would happen, he still felt this was too much and clenched his fists.

Prince knew Edgar would break into the building here. Because Ulya was caught, he must’ve certainly predicted it and wanted to make a mockery of Edgar.

“.....How could this be... this is terrible.”

A young man of the Scarlett Moon, ignorant of Prince’s cruelty, spoke in a trembling voice.

“What is this? It’s not two people but three. An arm.....there’s another.”

Having heard this, Edgar stopped his eyes at a cut in a black coat.

Picking it up with his cane, he confirmed it.

“This is Raven’s coat.”

Of course, Edgar was very disturbed.

He began to slowly breathe and gradually moved his eyes from the arm to the skull.

The head rolled beside the closet.

With long hair, he saw it was a woman.

“Ah -- the third was the maid.”

“Yes, they had hired servants here. Was she the only one?”

At that moment, Edgar closed his eyes to pray.

“However, they seemed to only been recently killed....were they imprisoned here the whole time?”

“Let's not dwell on it anymore.”

"Because once they're killed, they're nothing more than corpses."

He muttered and walked back.

This was an invitation from Prince. At the thought, Edgar clenched his teeth in anger.

The banquet was about to begin.

“Lord Edgar, there is a hole in the back of the closet....!”

Feeling very uneasy, he hurried out of the attic to the man who shouted from downstairs.



He was like a beast, being locked in an iron cage.

Near the cage, Ermine held a lamp. Squatting, there was a poor boy inside. Not only was he locked up in such a place, his hands were bound as well.

“Raven, did you not eat your meal?”

Raven hadn't touch the piece of bread which was rudely thrown into the cage. Well, indeed. It was difficult to grow an appetite for something like that. However, now was not the time to worry about food. He was trying not to respond to the will of the sprite.

Even under the light of the lamp, he did not seem to be glaring at anyone. If one were to open their eyes more to the lamp light, they could see his dark green eyes.

It was just like a lost soul in the depths of his bottomless pupils. Because he was touched by the Nightmare, which had awakened and strengthened the sprite that dwelled within his body, it was slowly but surely devouring Raven's

consciousness. That was how Ermine felt.

In the past, he had been caught in this state several times before. After being possessed by the sprite, he would constantly vent its killing intent on others. But then afterwards, Raven was always tired, too exhausted that he became lifeless.

He could not control the sprite or its excessive use of power, and Raven's human body could not bear the burden.

However, after he began following Edgar, this sort of thing no longer occurred. Ermine's painful memories began to resurface as she gazed at her brother.

"Hey, don't you dare let him out."

Ermine slowly looked back behind her in the direction of the voice. There she noticed a brown-skinned youth, standing in the doorway and fully alert as they discreetly pulled out a weapon.

In that moment, she recalled there was someone named Ulya who also disguised herself as a man.

Ulysses said that though her mission failed, she was still alive and in good condition here.

What is going on? She thought.

"Did you not get caught?"

Ermine asked as she slightly lifted her head, alert. Ulya didn't feel her particular tension and replied:

"He let me escape and wanted me to become a decoy. To use such obvious measures as the master, he is not as great as the rumors say, is he?"

As far as Ermine knew, Edgar had never let the enemy escape back to Princ, for Prince does not forgive failures quite so easily.

"Prince didn't ask you?"

Ulya chuckled a bit

"I am special."

Then, she looked out the window in the small room. (So the original raws mentioned that, in the actual novel, the author used the word "he" instead of "she." They mentioned they weren't sure if this was intended or an error, but

whoever did the raws used "she")

"The banquet hall is up front, directly opposite from the Tower of London. Prince should be resting. There, he should be sitting by the sidelines in the Grand Gallery to watch the others battle. Also, he's assigned you a task."

Ermine decided to come here because Prince had arranged something for her to take part in, but she suddenly felt an unpleasant chill in the air.

"You deceived Ulysses and secretly came here to see him. Prince seems to know that."

"What's his task?"

"He is to guide the dinner guest here."

".....Lord Edgar."

"That's right. You will do it well."

Ermine's eyes fell on her hands.

He's still alive.

No matter what, Edgar never tried to become close to Ermine or threatened her life.

For although he was in possession of her selkie fur, he had never abused that power.

Since you can whenever, why not just do it now?

To what extent much she betray him in order to die?

However, even if she felt she was not allowed to die, if that was Edgar's wish, then she would accept it.

Despite that, as long as she was still alive, she couldn't disobey Prince.

"Even so, I still cannot understand it. It was risky to take advantage of the Earl's servants for his bidding. Prince is certainly not an ordinary person."

Ermine was motionless as she looked at Ulya. She didn't understand why Ulya was in such a good mood.

In order to achieve her dreams, Ulya had remained by Prince's side. But, in Ermine's mind, she believed Ulya deserved some sympathy.

Ulya didn't understand Prince.

"I despise Prince. He knows this very well, so he takes advantage of me."

As long as it was to torture Edgar, he would do it. If he no longer needed her, or

if she was a threat to Prince, then she would be killed. It was as simple as that.

"Do you really believe that? About Prince helping you to return home." Ermine asked.

"Are you suggesting I'm being foolish? Did you not pester the Prince by begging him to help you?

Ask him to let you become the Earl's woman."

Ermine was silent. She knew that if she said such a thing to Prince, he would find it very amusing. However, Prince had already seen right through her act of pandering, and knew that she was secretly plotting something.

Prince would only really find it all too amusing. To request from him, making a claim, for her to be with Edgar. It was not practical to do, but she still continued to hold her feelings for Edgar.

"Are you and I not the same? Since you cannot do it yourself, you want to depend on Prince's power."

"No. I am not the same as you."

Ermine unknowingly raised her voice.

"Perhaps, I was wrong. As I don't depend on Prince, I also have the desire to achieve power. I have come to finally to realize this."

Ulya said as she gave Ermine a smile full of contempt.

"Yes, I am the key. That is why the Prince wanted to have me."

Suddenly, her tone of voice became extremely arrogant, and then she removed something from within her coat pocket.

"You are pale skinned, but you and I both have the same blood of Hadiya flowing in our veins, correct? Therefore, you are my people as well. In the future, you may also come to work for me, along with your brother."

She held two pieces of the dark-green Diopside.

One of them was the killed victim's possession, Mr. Kent, and the other was Ulya's herself. The two pieces should have been with Prince.

"Prince gave them to me. It's in order to allow the sprite in the boy to recognize that I'm Hadiya's royal representative."

It was to make Raven obey her.

Warriors of the sprite would serve those who held the gems of the Royal family.

The elderly man had once said as Ermine listened to him in the forest. Therefore, they became the King's most loyal guardians.

Despite that, Raven still served Edgar, who didn't hold any of the stones. Recognizing him as his master, Raven had been able to control his sprite.

Could the Diopside's magic be more powerful than Raven's will?

Ulya slowly approached Raven in the cage.

Ermine could only hold her breath as she watched intently.

Placing her hands in the gap of the iron cage, with Raven's head hung down, she gently placed the Diopside on his brow.

In an instant, Raven's head slightly moved.

He held dull, glassy eyes. But, it worked. He then turned his attention to Ulya.

Has the sprite responded to the Diopside yet?

However, Raven did not look as though he had awoken. His senses were still dull.

Ulya then took out the key and unlocked the door of the cage.

"Come, come out, my servant."

With his hands bound, Raven carefully stood up.

He walked in unsteady steps, swaying side-to-side, one step at a time, from his cage. Ermine couldn't help but hold her hand out to him.

In that very moment, Raven aggressively grabbed her hand, twisting it upwards before pushing her into the ground.

Then, he quickly struck a blow at her in order to keep her down. Had he been wielding a sword, Ermine would have died.

And his hands were still tied.

"Stop."

From Ulya's one word command, Raven released Ermine's hand.

Even when Edgar was around, Raven couldn't very well obey when in the state of battle. But here, he was completely subservient to the holder of the stones.

"It is such an obedient thing." Ulya said, satisfied as Raven knelt at her feet.

"What are you going to do with Raven?"

"It appears Prince intends to use the boy to break the Earl of Ashenbert. Then, he'll use the magic of the boy's sprite in order to find the third Diopside. Raven

should be able to sense where it's located.”

"However," with a smile on her lips, she muttered, “Ulysses and Prince do not know, but I already hold the third stone in my hands. If I’m supported by Hadiya’s legendary sprite and the goddess of war, how much power would I gain?”



Lydia felt a light flicker in her eyes like a needle-like beam, and she opened them.

She sat up from the grass.

The sky was filled with clouds. The sun was obviously obscured, but it felt as if the sunlight was dazzling at her.

Her eyes inadvertently fell to the moonstone ring, which was emitting a faint light.

The magical moonstone shone in alignment with the phases of the moon. It looked even brighter than usual, because it was nearly approaching the full moon now.

Or could it be, this light was what made it possible for Lydia to wake from Kelpie’s enchanting magic?

She thought so for she didn’t see Kelpie anywhere.

Across from the sparse trees, she was able to see the gentle, sloping hills. Although she didn’t see any houses, the grass left a path seemingly paved by foot.

She should be able to escape now. Thinking, Lydia stood up.

Kelpie must have thought his magic would have prevented the sleeping Lydia from waking up. Therefore, he left her in order to search of food.

Finding a way, she climbed down the steep slopes and went on the path. She decided to believe in the power of Edgar and his ring, continuing to follow along the trail.

Lydia actually didn’t know which direction she needed to head. However, because it was a path, there was always going to be someone there. Once she saw someone, she decided to ask.

Lydia’s first encounter was not a human being though.

Sitting on a small roadside stone, holding a smoke pipe in his mouth was a tiny fellow with wrinkles.

Whether she was overlooking the path or around the hills, she still found no other humans or any houses.

“Ah, kind sir, can you tell me something please?”

In the end, she ended up calling out only to the goblin.

“On which side is London at?”

Next, she took out a piece of cheese Kelpie given to her and placed it on top of the grass.

Hardly could it be called a hat, the woven leaves from the trees covered the goblin underneath. He snuck a glimpse at Lydia.

(Are you in a hurry?)

“Yes.”

Thus, the small, light-brown goblin, smoking a pipe, turned his head to the right.

“Thank you, kind Sir.”

Again, she continued on the road.

A few moments later, the sky suddenly became dark.

It was yet too early for it to be sundown. As she thought this, it continued to grow darker.

She then suddenly discovered that beyond the path was a large, luscious forest surrounding the end of it.

“Oh!”

Lydia cried out.

So, that’s how it is. This must be the goblin’s shortcut. That is very bad.

Though she was a fairy doctor, she still sometimes made small mistakes like this. Because of that, she really felt ashamed.

‘However, I can’t turn back now. I can only move quickly through it’ She thought.

If I were to stop here and go in another direction, I would surely get lost. According to the goblin, he told me to go down in this direction.

Encouraging herself, Lydia gently caressed the moonstone ring and moved forward.



There was a large hole in the wall, hidden in the back of the closet. The hole penetrated through the narrow foundation of the wall, which led to the neighboring home next door.

Slade mentioned that no one lived there, but it seemed that Prince's henchmen and Ulya must have broke in and occupied the place.

Edgar and the others quickly entered through the hole, crossing to the neighbor's home. They soon reached a strange room with an iron cage sitting in the middle.

"Ah, what is this? Are they also keeping a beast?"

'It's Raven,' Edgar whispered to himself.

After inserting the key to the cage, the door gave a wide opening. However, the only thing that came out was a piece of bread that tumbled across the ground.

"The young entourage was kept in such a place?"

Where did he go this time?

"I forgot to tell you, Raven may now be in a state more dangerous than that of a feral beast."

Dismayed, the Scarlett Moon members looked at each other with an astonished expression.

"Then, how would we rescue him after we find him?"

With that being asked, Edgar began to think of their next move. Suddenly, he felt someone was looking over his shoulder, so he turned his head toward the door.

Ermine was standing there.

"Please forget about Raven."

Her gaze slowly swept across the unsuspected Scarlett Members, as she walked into the room.

"Why should I give up?"

"Raven's sprite acknowledges the two pieces of Diopside held by Ulya, who is now King. He has become prepared to battle for the King, subjected to serve as a soldier for Hadiya. Lord Edgar, if he received orders to kill you, he will not hesitate to do it."

In other words, more than losing himself, his sprite's murderous intent has also gone ballistic.

Therefore, should we really give up?

Even if the sprite recognized Ulya, it was by no means Raven's own will.

Edgar began to walk towards Ermine. Standing close, he sternly looked directly at her. She gave a puzzled expression, her beautiful face went rigid, but she did not look away.

"You were not ordered to come tell me this, is that right? You should follow the commands of Prince."

"I still have a free will."

"Therefore, you have come to warn me? Don't beat around the bush with me again. You know where Raven is, don't you? I will force you to speak if I must."

Although it pained him to do so, Edgar still had to incite Ermine with hostility.

"..... To take you there, that is my order."

"Hmm, so this is for Prince. This is quite an interesting scene."

"I can only bring Lord Edgar. One person alone."

Ermine whispered in a tone only Edgar could hear.

This was to avoid the Scarlett Members from causing tension and uproar between each other.

For Edgar, however, inviting only one person was what he would've wanted.

He didn't want to let any members of the Scarlett Members to be harmed by Raven.

"I am not alone, Raven is here, too."

He whispered.

Regardless of what state Raven was in, he was still Edgar's most trusted servant. He will bring Raven back. For when he does challenge Prince face-to-face, he'll be sure to bring Raven along.

"Bring me over there."

Edgar firmly ordered, taking the chance while everyone was uninformed of Ermine only bringing Edgar alone.

He placed his coat in his hand and double-checked his waist for the Merrows' sword.

Edgar inherited the Blue Knight Earl's name. The war was approaching soon to sweep England into a battle of the war goddess and the Diopside. Even if Ulya had gotten two pieces of the three stones, Edgar must still confront her.

The guardian of the Merrows' sword and the Earl's fairy Banshee acknowledged Edgar's identity as the Blue Knight Earl.

He not only planned to rescue Raven, but to do everything possible in order to prevent the revival of the war goddess.

This task was entrusted to him by the woman who fought against Prince and his organization, Lady Gladys.

"Is it really not a problem?" Ermine asked.

"Even if you don't take me, Ulysses will come in your stead. And I certainly don't want to be escorted by him."

Ermine extended her both hands to Edgar. Then, she placed one hand on his shoulder. The next moment, Ermine began to form a magical circle. Seeing this, Jack and Louis began to take action.

"It will be fine. Please close your eyes."

Edgar closed his eyes only for a moment.

Suddenly, the surrounding scenery changed.

It was a deserted garden. It seemed like it was left unattended for a long time.

The groves around grew freely, and the flower beds held withered flowers. It was a wretched sight. The brick sidewalks were broken and bare, littered with piles of fallen leaves.

Edgar and Ermine stood face-to-face under the arch of the pavilion.

Formerly very luscious, all that was left were the withered vines leaving branches and a mesh-like skeleton across the dome. If one were to look up, it would feel the same as being trapped in a bird cage.

Edgar, who looked around, then peered down at Ermine who was standing in front of him.

Her deep-brown eyes looked sorrowfully back at him.

Their eyes gazed so closely to each other. It was difficult to imagine what relationship they had, but Ermine's eyes held no hostility nor hatred.

Regardless, toward Ermine, Edgar couldn't believe she would leave him as his

enemy.

“...When we escaped from Prince, we didn't sleep for three days and three nights. Do you remember that?”

To Edgar's forward questions, Ermine naturally nodded. Perhaps, she was also reminiscing the same memories of the past.

“When we finally got rid of that shadow tracking us down, we hid in an abandoned garden, just like this one.”

All of them were faced with the same burdens and experiences as partners there. That time, they crawled up in the tent-like trees above the decaying pavilion, squeezing against each as they slept.

During their sleep, Edgar peeked up at the moon through the gaps between the leaves, thinking up all kinds of plans for the future.

How do you want to live? How do you want to protect your companions from the tracker in order to escape Prince? He had asked himself continuously.

It was also the same for Ermine.

“.....How could possibly I forget.”

Ermine looked into his eyes, and her eyes were no different from that time.

In order for her to be happy, Edgar intended to always protect her.

But now, looking at her, he realized her affection for him was the same as in the past. He realised that he was being quite selfish, refusing to share her feelings yet praying for her happiness.

But, although he hadn't thought much about it, Edgar was not the same as before either.

He was considered important to Ermine just as before, but he had not been the same.

He didn't believe that was the reason for her betrayal. However, the fact that she couldn't find her place beside him may have been one of the main reasons.

“To have me wait and entertain me in such a place, Prince has poor tastes, doesn't he?”

Hearing those words from Edgar, Ermine's disappointment was shown by her lonely expression.

“I did not say that to reminisce the memories of Prince.”

She seemed to have awakened from a daze and turned her back to Edgar, ready to leave.

Edgar held onto her arm.

'I might no longer have the opportunity to tell her this, so I must tell her now.'

He immediately thought.



“Ermine, I hope that you will forgive me.”

“.....Forgive you? Even though I was the one who betrayed you?”

“I love Lydia.”

"I know."

"Before, I used to believe that even if you hated me, I could still give you my life. But, I cannot do that anymore. My life belongs to Lydia. I can only die for her. I want to live together with her."

He felt that these words were cruel to her, so he revealed a complex expression. Even so, Edgar still continued:

"You are in my heart. More than a lover, more than anyone else. I believe that, between us, the bond as family can never be cut off. The love you wanted from me was not long lasting, but I wanted to somehow convey that to you differently. I thought that I could bear all the burdens you suffered through. This was perhaps merely my own self-righteous thoughts."

"Lord Edgar, it is not like that. I received more love than I had expected from you."

"But I'm afraid that it wasn't enough, was it?"

"....."

"If you had only kept your distance, you'd be able to forget the painful past. I believed that because you were so important to me. However, perhaps I only wanted to make it easier for myself."

Ermine should have expected it. Even though she was hurt, she continued to pursue him.

"After meeting Lydia, I understand now. Even when it wasn't becoming any easier, I still developed feelings that I couldn't get rid of, despite there being pain. Getting her involved in this, even though she may get hurt, I still don't want to let her go. And I know that if anything were to happen to her, I would regret it to death, but I still cannot stop myself from pursuing her."

Ermine sighed softly and seemed to smile a bit.

Edgar finally experienced what Ermine had always felt, but it was for another girl. Her lips twitched into a bitter smile.

"For Miss Lydia, as long as you do not anger her, it is fine."

A sharp and blunt remark. That was truly Ermine's style.

Edgar let go of her hand and she stepped back, looking up at the sky through the gaps between the dead branches.

“Prince is there. He has been watching your movements here.”

In the distant sky, there was a floating balloon. It seemed to be approaching the garden.

Did he wish to see Edgar and Raven, to fully enjoy watching Edgar’s torment of being killed by Raven, as Edgar tried to stop him without getting hurt?

Either way, if Raven was truly there by Edgar’s side, Raven himself would attempt to forestall the battle, careful to parry about so that his negligence would lead to him to being killed instead.

“Well, is this the fairy realm?”

“No, it's somewhere in the human world.”

That’s a little better. Nonetheless, that in itself wasn’t very helpful or good. He had just reduced the chance of being affected by the magic. As much as possible, he had to avoid the unexpected hardships that could come from it.

But, would Raven really wield a weapon against him?

He did not know how to regain control of his sprite, so his consciousness could only wait.

Then, suddenly, Edgar was pulled by Ermine. The rustling of the trees began to sway.

"Finally, I found you, Earl."

However, the sound of the voice was slightly disappointing.

Later, it was the grey cat who jumped swiftly before Edgar, covered in the twigs of the pavilion.

“Nico!....how did you come here?”

Although Nico lifted his head in alert of Ermine, he rushed in his breath and said:

“The members of the Scarlet Moon were in chaos because you and Ermine suddenly disappeared. So, I had to hastily catch up. The guys, even though there was a big hole in front of them, couldn’t even see it in the cage.”

There was a hole in the cage?

“I’ve already told them where that hole is connected to, and they are now on their way here. No, actually, I still don’t know if they understood what I was saying. Really, doing good things is truly not easy. Anyway, Lydia escaped from

Kelpie and is heading her way towards us!”

“Coming here? How does she know of this place?”

“Well, at first, Kelpie was in front of your manor roaring, ‘Give Lydia back to me’ because she never came back. So, he went to look for her. I asked a goblin on the way here, and that was when I learned she was on her way. If she walked into the goblin’s shortcut, shouldn’t she be here with you by now?”

“What? Isn’t it dangerous for her to come here? This is Prince’s base.”

“Oh, really?”

Nico jumped in shock, then hid in the bushes, though his furry tail stuck out. However, he seemed to have thought it over because, within the gaps between the leaves, he poked his head out and looked up towards Edgar.

“Lydia tried to arrive here early, and so she took the Goblin’s shortcut. She very much cares about you and Raven, that’s for certain.”

“Needless to say then, I’ll have to find Lydia and take her away from here.”

Nico nodded between the leaves.

“Lord Edgar, wandering aimlessly here is very dangerous. In these lush areas, there are a lot of places where the enemies could hide and may attack from.”

“It’ll be even more difficult to take Lydia out of here then. It would be better for Lydia to be away from here no matter what.”

“Ermine, from listening to your words, I cannot decide which side you are on.”

Instead of parting with words of farewell, Edgar smiled to Ermine who was silent.

For them to go their separate ways, that was inevitable. Although it was different from Edgar’s expectations of happiness, Ermine has already found her own path, while Edgar himself had chosen to be with the one he loved the most.

Not Ermine, but another person.

“As I said, with Lydia, I cannot control myself.”

With that said, Edgar left.

Chapter 6 - The Secret of the Diopsides

During the days when the sprite within his body went ballistic, Raven couldn't sleep due to the piercing pain he was experiencing.

In extreme fatigue, he was entirely unable to move his body. Not even to lie down. He could only squat like a broken puppet.

Even so, no one cared for the young boy.

He was always the one being held in a room, embedded with iron bars.

Whenever he could come out, it was for training purposes.

To teach him how to use different methods and techniques with weapons. His mentors were always replaced, because the young boy often killed them during training.

However, his skills in battle rapidly progressed.

As he continued to grow stronger unceasingly, it became more and more difficult for him to deal with the people around him. Once he was taught the use of corporal punishment, he did not even mind harming others.

Therefore, even with his hands and feet bounded, shackled by chains, anyone who feared him did not dare approach him from outside. And those who were close to him could not resist the atrocious violence inflicted onto them by the boy.

At that time, however, there was also no Prince. Those who were discharged from educating the young boy had already forgiven him for what he'd done.

There were all kinds of different scholars and doctors who examined and studied the young boy's mental state. Even religionists and spiritual clairvoyants, who were hired for their supposed powers, did not succeed.

The youth's special abilities peaked Prince's interest. However, if Prince was unable to take advantage of it, Raven would not be able to escape his fate of death. Such words slowly reached the young boy's ears.

With his peers around him, they were waiting for Prince's words --- "Enough is enough." They were only willing to do one thing, to serve the boy's meal

through the gap between the iron bars. It was at this point, he appeared.

“I found your master.”

His sister said. She often avoided the eyes and ears of the people. In the middle of the night, she would come see him. However, this was the first time she had brought anyone else in there with her.

It was a handsome youth who made other people doubt if he truly existed in this world, who had a head of beautiful golden hair.

The boy watched as the youth unlocked the lock on his cage, using a key which the youth had obtained through god knows what means, and walked in without hesitation.

Looking down at the boy with a smile on his face, he very softly touched the boy's cheek.

“Would you like to be my warrior?”

He said.

As the boy was touched that very moment, it was as if the boy felt the sprite worship the youth, was it all an illusion?

He was constantly suffering, bearing the burden of the unreasonable violence. Because of the sprite, he was restless. He wanted to fight back. But, because of the shackles, he couldn't do anything. Before, the pain in his nerves prickled him like needles. However, all of a sudden, it was as if all the needles were pulled out.

“I will save you from hell, if you and your sprite swear allegiance to me.”

From his manners and words, he was unlike any other youth the boy had seen. Although he didn't know what a noble was, he understood why his sister said the words: “I found your master.”

The youth was not afraid of the sprite in the boy's body. No matter how much he'd heard rumors of the danger, the youth rightfully touched him. Even when faced with an unknown opponent, he instinctively already had the upper hand. Without the sense of being dominated by oppression, the boy was wrapped in a sheltered, calm feeling.

“I will give you a new name, for the sake of your new life.”

Raven, he called him.

“It is said that, in ancient mythology, it was the longest living name in history among all fairies. From now on, I hope you can dominate over your sprite.”

The boy grasped the youth’s hand with both hands, bringing it up to touch the cheek of his face. Had it been anyone before, the sprite would have took the chance to hold the arm, breaking it and smashing his skull. But at that time, the boy did not feel that impulse.

Although no one had ever taught him, the boy naturally knelt his knees down on the ground, placing the youth’s white fingers on his forehead.



Lydia was walking alone within the dark forest.

The tall trees stretched out as dense foliage above her, making her feel as though she was walking through a tunnel.

From time to time, she heard the calls of unknown animals break the silence surrounding them, and the lower tree branches were always catching on to her clothes and hair. Despite all this, even though she was frightened each time, she did not stop.

Lydia knew that this road, hidden by the rocks and trees all along the eerie swamp, was merely an illusion.

If she kept going, they could become dry twigs, pebbles, and puddles.

The fairy path reflected how people felt in their hearts. Therefore, the more anxious she felt, the more difficult the path became.

Though half-awake, Lydia continued to move forward in the realm of magic.

Near Lydia’s surroundings, there was another creeping chirping. A singing chime.

She turned her head in that direction.

The owner of the sound then spread out its black wings and flew. Hovering in a circle above her, it settled on the front branches before Lydia and stared at her. It had a grey body with black wings, a hooded Carrion Crow.

It was only a common crow? However, since it appeared in a place like this, is it an embodiment of a fairy?

Thinking of the three legendary incarnations of the goddess, they did hold an image of a hooded Crow.

A horrific crow flying on the battlefield, craving for the blood of the defeated.
(Who is standing my way?)

She seemed to hear the Crow speak.

Lydia thought, perhaps it was because the war goddess was on her mind, which in turn created this illusion.

However, even if it was seen in the fairy realm, there was a chance the illusion could also be true. For Lydia, she couldn't determine whether if it was or wasn't.

(Is this the Blue Knight Earl's doing? Do you believe you can actually stop me? There used to be an outbreak of war upon this island. Blood was shed and flowed like a river. The Prince of Calamity had given me my blood. Therefore, I made a contract with him.)

Hearing the words 'Prince of Calamity', Lydia looked up at the Crow.

It was Prince that Lady Gladys had driven out of England. Due to his defeat in the war 100 years ago, her royal family was cursed with the abomination of Prince, the hateful prince who was born from the power of the evil fairies.

Lydia heard that the man who was now in opposition to Edgar was a descendant of the original Prince in the organization. Therefore, hearing the Crow's words, Lydia became very anxious.

The Carrion Crow spoke again.

(In this island nation, the power of the dark fairies was growing stronger and stronger. Prince did not awaken only me alone.)

Then, who is this Crow? Badb? Macha? Or is it Morrigan?

Not to mention, these may have been the words spoken to the previous Blue Knight Earl, Lady Gladys.

What Lydia was seeing in this illusionary space, did the Prince's organization awaken the goddess of the past?

(Blue Knight Earl, the goddess of war does not belong to anyone. I will only bless my side on the battlefield, the side of those who have given me more blood.)

The Crow then let out a strange screech that sounded like laughter.

(If you detest blood, then you will not win. Do you wish to stop my

resurrection? I see. So, is that what you sent those men to do?)

The Crow looked up toward a branch, which suddenly began to rustle and shake.

What Lydia found wrapped around it was a large serpent. Horrified, Lydia let out a loud scream.

She desperately wanted to escape from this snake, and so she immediately ran off.

However, no matter where she ran, the serpent continued to coil in the tree. Or at least, appearing within Lydia's sight. As if overlooking the distant mountain ridges from the train window, it will never disappear from sight.

The serpent and Crow eyed each other with animosity.

After being confronted for a long time, the serpent suddenly moved.

And, right then, it pounced toward the Crow. Seizing with a snapping bite, the serpent tightly entangled itself around the bird.

The Crow bitterly struggled against the serpent's attack. With its scales peeling off, along with the Nordic Crow's blood streaming with it, the serpent was attempting to swallow it.

Their fierce fight continued. One of the serpent's eyes was pecked, and it immediately curled up its body in pain and agony. In order to extricate itself from the serpent's entanglement, the Crow began to dig out the serpent's eyes. However, that did not deter the serpent for it never relaxed the strength of its hold.

Eventually, the serpent snapped on the Crow's head, forcefully tighten around it. Breaking the Crow's bones, without moving its mouth, it finally swallowed down the Crow.

Soon, with its bulging belly, the serpent began to move and lifted its head suddenly, looking over at Lydia.

Her legs, trembling, frozen in place. Lydia couldn't help but become astonished. In one of the serpent's eyes, it held a transparent, dark-green color.

It was the rare, green Diopside - the Ceylon gem that was used by Lady Gladys. This serpent was the descendant of the sprite.

It swallowed the awakened goddess and sealed her.

Such a terrible, magical thing. As it was eyeing Lydia, motionless, it watched at her.

Must run.

The moment she thought of it, the serpent took aim and lounged at her.

With its fangs baring open in front of her, Lydia was immediately pushed to the ground.

However, she then heard the serpent drop in the thick patch of grass and a voice reached her ears as someone caught her arm and pulled her up.

"We must get out of here."

Raven.

Grabbing Lydia's arm, he began to run.

"Raven, how are you here"

"I should be the one asking that question, Miss Lydia. Is this not my dream?"

"A dream?"

Not before long, the two people reached a rundown cottage that looked like a pile of dried twigs.

"It should not be able to catch up here... probably."

Raven said as he released Lydia's arm, feeling apologetic.

"This cottage... Raven, is this also part your dream?"

"Well, perhaps.....I feel I have seen this a long time ago. It appears I was here with my sister a few times before.....but I cannot remember. My dream started from here."

In the dream, Raven was always wandering in this same place. He wished to go back to Edgar's side, but he couldn't go back. Wanting to wake up but not being able to.

From here, going into the forest, that was when the little Carrion Crow and the serpent would appear. They always battled in front of Raven, but the serpent was always victorious. However, the serpent would then turn to aim towards Raven, to attack and eat him. The next moment, Raven would wake up. However, he did not actually wake up. In fact, it was only an illusion because he would return before this cottage again.

But, this time, Lydia appeared. Raven had gotten a good dream. For this was the

first time it had changed.

"I was on my way to London by taking a fairy's shortcut. However, it seems like I've gotten lost."

"Is Lord Edgar alright?"

Lydia nodded as she thought. Raven couldn't wake up because the sprite was in control of him after all.

Raven's sprite was the who went ballistic on the London Bridge, so Raven was not in control of his own body. Since he was being imprisoned by Ulysses in that state, Lydia had no idea what had become of him.

However, since Raven had appeared at this place, he must still be controlled by the sprite that resided in his body.

"Oh, hey, you should come with me. Thatway, we may be able to leave here together."

Lydia pulled at Raven's hand.

"All right? You don't have to think about anything, and just hold onto my hand and follow me. Just act like your my servant, or something like that."

"Understood. But still, holding hands with my master's fiancée is unforgiveable."

Raven wanted to discretely release his hand, but Lydia did not let go.

"This is an emergency. So even Edgar will not get angry." If we don't do this, we will surely be separated.

".....What should I do?"

Raven looked very upset.

That man's jealousy was like his sweet words of praise - both of them were used to woo women. There had been instances where he had deliberately shown jealousy to attract their attention. However, nothing was wrong with holding hands, right?

"Well, as long as you don't say anything, he will not know."

"I cannot hide anything from Lord Edgar."

"Listen, if he is angry because of this kind of thing, then I misjudged him for he must truly be a wrongful man. What do you think, Raven? Is Edgar that kind of person?"

A little worried for a while, he sighed as he replied:

“No, he is not.”

The threat seemed to work.

“Right. Well then, let’s go.”

Lydia began to move.

Quietly, he followed after her. The Crow and the serpent didn’t seem as though they would appear either. Lydia’s determination to escape from there was very strong.

Shortly after, the overlapping branches ahead seemed to clear up, revealing a pale, lavender sky. A little further down the road, it became brighter.

And then, as if it was dawn, the lavender sky revealed a glimmering shimmer.

The way out must be nearby. However, as their surroundings gradually began to brighten, Raven’s footsteps began to slowly grow heavy.

“Hey, let’s hurry.”

However, he suddenly stopped and loosened Lydia’s hand.

“Raven?”

“.....I’ve forgotten. I can no longer fight anymore. I hesitated to kill my master’s enemies.”

“Are you speaking of Ermine? Didn’t Edgar himself let you stop?”

“However, even slight confusion can lead to someone’s death. Therefore, I cannot control the sprite anymore. If it is like this, I will not be able to protect my master.”

As if the clouds dispersed around the sun in the sky, it became bright all around them. The scenery of luscious jungle-like forest suddenly disappeared.

Meanwhile, Raven’s form also seemed to start fading, turning pale.

If it continued, he could not wake up.

Panicked, Lydia reached out to him with her hand, but she could no longer touch him.

“Miss Lydia, if you see me in the real world, you absolutely must not approach me. Also, I must request a favor from you, tell Lord Edgar: ‘When my body’s taken over by the sprite, I can only see with my right eye, When the sprite goes berserk, the left side is my weakness. If you wish to beat me, you must.....’”

“No, Raven! As long as you still have your human emotions, you are real and true. You are a warrior who can fight for Edgar!”

Despite her cries, it failed to stop him. Raven’s shadow suddenly disappeared. At that moment, Lydia was standing in an unfamiliar place. A strange, wasteful garden.

She was aware that she was no longer in the forest. The overgrown weeds and bushes were not part of the disparate woods. Past the garden were standing, Romanesque columns.

Here, is this near London.. Or, because she lost her way, had she arrived to an unexpected place?

As she worried for the moment, she looked around and found a person’s shadow walking in between the stone columns.

She was only around Raven until now.

So, he must have returned so they could be together again. As Lydia thought happily, she ran forward. However, she noticed something was amiss. Suddenly, she stopped her footsteps.

He didn’t wear a coat and his necktie was loosened and tattered.

In order to avoid disgracing the name of Edgar’s entourage, Raven had always paid attention to his appearance.

Right now, this person was the real Raven, who was still under the control of the murderous sprite.

He held a knife in his hand.

Lydia immediately turned around to flee.

But, in the blink of an eye, he suddenly caught up behind her.

“Lydia, here!”

Then, she heard the sound of Edgar’s voice.

Where? With no time to turn and look around, an outstretched hand grabbed her into the bushes.

“Edgar.....”

She fell right from his hands into his arms. Only this time did Lydia forget her usual, stubborn sense of shame.

Her cheek was desperately close to his chest. And because she was forced to

cling to him, she really felt relieved in her heart.

“Edgar, I.....”

But, there was no time to talk at that moment. He immediately pushed Lydia to the back and pulled out his sword.

The Merrows' sword caught Raven's knife, the clash of their blades made a crisp, metallic sound.

In every possible effort to defend, Edgar finally managed to block Raven's attack and push him back.

He then pulled Lydia's hand and ran.

Raven's speed was very fast. Was it not all in vain to try to escape? However, the place Edgar ran into were the tall, towering trees which woven into a labyrinth.

The trees grew unpredictably, completely obscuring the road. Running through it, they were able to successfully escape from Raven tracking them. Then, with his sword, Edgar was slashing off small branches blocking their way, only moving forward.

Although she wasn't able to hear footsteps catching up to them, Lydia couldn't help but look back behind her a few times to see.

“Raven will get lost. He is not good at dealing with this kind of place.”

“Really?”

“Initially, when he was in the manor, he often lost his way.”

Edgar finally slowed down. As he walked steadily, he said.

“Well, what about you?”

“Me?”

“This maze. Normally, once you enter it, you cannot come out.”

Lydia was disturbed, but he continued to cut off the branches near their feet.

“As a child, my home had a garden maze. I used to go there in order to avoid my tutors' pestering and that little nagging aunt of mine.”

And to skillfully bring visiting noble young ladies out to play, after luring them away from their watchful maid servants. But, of course, he didn't say that out loud.

Lydia could have never imagined him behaving in that manner. In her mind, she

saw an ordinary image of a young boy being naughty and mischievous. She smiled at the thought.

“However, the structure should not be similar to the maze here, right?”

“As long as I can be with you, let me stay here forever and I won’t mind.”

He stopped and put up the Merrows’ Sword. With a teasing expression, he turned his head back to look at her.

“How can you live in such a place?”

“If it weren’t this place, would you’d liked to live with me?”

Lydia was still hesitate, so she only remained silent. Although she liked the thought of it, it wasn’t easy for her heart to completely go through with it either.

“Now is not the time to say that.”

“However, regardless of the time, this is what I care the most about.”

With that, he pulled Lydia around to his side.

“I wanted to see you so much ... I was afraid you weren’t coming back. Nico informed me Raven’s location at the time. But, then he said you were kept imprisoned by Kelpie. I was worried that was what you wanted.”

“Eh, why?”

The way he held her was different this time.

This time, he wrapped his arms around her back, closely watching her as she was being shy. Although she insisted not to run away, it was already taking Lydia her utmost efforts to express her feelings towards him.

“I worried whether you had chosen Kelpie.”

In front of Kelpie, she chose Edgar. She spoke words that she could absolutely not say in front of Edgar.

“But....I promised... I will not leave you alone.”

I am really not being candid. Although she thought that, she spoke in a casual, peaceful tone.

“Thank you. You are really a good girl.”

No, I am not.

“That, Edgar, Kelpie is not a human but a fairy. He’s my friend..... and not that kind of way.”

“What about me? Can I be that kind of way?”

Looking at her with passionate eyes, she thought to herself, she must certainly be flushed in the face. It was impossible to answer him.

Before she could respond, his lips touched the temple of her head.

When she felt it, she became startled and nervous. So, his fingers caressed her hair in order to soothe her.

His long, slender fingers wrapped around Lydia's head. Being held by him so intimately close, she could not look away.

His kiss fallen on her eyelids that she had to close her eyes.

However, she suddenly felt afraid.

If she closed her eyes, then she couldn't see Edgar and she wouldn't know if he was looking at her. The one reflecting in his eyes, is it really me?

However, Edgar made a promise with her.

He said that before she accepted his proposal, he wouldn't force a kiss on her.

“.....I said, wait a moment.”

Lydia whispered with her eyes closed. Because she was close to him, she felt Edgar slightly drew back a bit, as it gently moved about the surrounding air.

“Yes. I'm sorry.”

That's a lie.

But why do I feel regret for lying to him now?

Ugh, what am I thinking.

Lydia miserably pushed Edgar's arm and took a step back.

Anyway, now was not the time to think of such things, so she quickly changed the subject.

“Oh, what is this place? Raven was hidden near the London Bridge, right?”

“It seems that Prince chose this place where Raven and I would fight.”

At Lydia's stubborn manner to change the subject, Edgar could only give a wry, bitter smile. However, he answered her question.

Gradually, they were able to walk out of the jagged, tangled maze of trees.

Lydia didn't know whether she felt relieved or disappointed as she followed behind him.

“Raven's sprite seemed to have acknowledged Ulya as King. As long as his sprite

is in control, Raven will treat us as enemies now.”

“Fight against Raven? How can this be...”

“Regardless, in the end if Raven remains in that state, there would inevitably be a war.”

“From here, would you be able to run out and escape? You do not have to fight Raven after all. You only need to overthrow Prince.”

However, Edgar firmly shook his head.

“I wish to capture Raven again. If he can restore his consciousness and memories, then the fight between us will naturally end.”

“Until then, you will be killed.”

“Prince should also not wish for me to be killed. He just wants to enjoy the fierce fight between me and my most trusted Raven.”

“Even though Raven is unconscious and the murderous sprite will not show any mercy?”

“Ulya will be commanding him.”

Then, this was more dangerous for Edgar. There was no guarantee that he would not be killed.

Nevertheless, Edgar's determination to fight was strong. Rather than the risk of being killed, maintaining their current situation was more painful for him.

He was betrayed by Ermine, taken away from Raven, and now he must also fight against him. Forced to determine the life and death of the people close to him, it was an enormously shameful suffering. This was all in order to break Edgar into despair. Having him submit to his knees, the people around him trampled on him to have Edgar reduced to being Prince's tool.

By now, Lydia began to feel intense hatred for Prince's methods and practices. After all, this was a battle Edgar could not win in the slightest.

“No. Edgar, Raven is still unable to wake up. He said he is unable to protect you.”

Edgar cleared out the way of the branches. Then, they arrived to a place of

exposed rock walls which surrounded and enclosed a fountain that lied across from it.

This was the right way out. Edgar, who was standing there, was surprised and turned to look at Lydia.

“Raven had said that? When?”

“It was during the time when I was taking the fairy shortcut. I seemed to have interrupted Raven’s dream, and he said he couldn’t wake up from it. However, I believe he may not wake up, because he doesn’t wish to wake up.”

“He doesn’t wish to wake up? What is going on?”

“It was because he was unable to kill Ermine.....He didn’t understand why he didn’t kill her. And so he suddenly felt as though he was weak, as if he became incompetent. Therefore, that was how the ballistic sprite took over, with Raven’s conscious being suppressed like that.”

Hearing Lydia’s words discouraged him. Edgar painfully frowned as he furrowed his brows.

“I tried to convince him to come out, but I still failed. Then, near the end of it, he told me..... ”

Whether she should say Raven’s important words now, Lydia actually very puzzled. Regardless when she says it, it would be a painful choice Edgar would have to make. However, in order to let Edgar win against Prince, Raven decided to sacrifice himself. Edgar himself must decide how to deal with Raven's will.

“Raven’s spirit cannot see with its left eye. With the spirit controlling his body now, that would be his weakness. He wanted me to tell you that.”

Edgar was silent and looked up at the sky. Under that serious expression, what kind of determination does he have now?

“Lydia, Prince is in that balloon, overlooking the garden. From time to time, he is reflecting light. It should be his way of contacting Ulya on the ground.”

After hearing this, Lydia noted the floating balloon in the sky for the first time.

“It is difficult to see us as long as we’re in this thick labyrinth of grass and trees. However, once we leave, we would be immediately found. Therefore,

you must not stay here. Nico was looking for you earlier. So, you go with him and quietly escape from here, alright?”

“Edgar, are you going to go?”

“The opponent is Raven. So, you understand that, right? I’ll go there alone.”
Lydia and Ravan couldn’t afford to fight, but Edgar didn’t care despite her efforts to stop him.

However, the one in control of Raven is his sprite. Even though it was a distant, exotic spirit, it was similar to a dark fairy. Something may occur where only the fairy doctor Lydia could resolve.

“No, I’ll go. Perhaps I can find a way to wake up Raven. Once he comes to his senses, there won’t be a fight.”

“It’s impossible, that was what you just said.”

“However, I want to be your strength.”

“I am very happy. However, right now, it is too dangerous.”

“That’s right. So, give me Lydia.”

A voice was heard from a dark horse who jumped right in front of the bushes.

“Kelpie!”

“I found you, Lydia. Without my permission, when you lifted the sleep spell before I returned, it made me very much worried.”

“And yet you casted magic on me without my permission. I said I was going to go back!”

Kelpie transformed into his human form and nervously scratched his head. Nevertheless, he pouted and retorted flippantly:

“However, just earlier, didn’t the Earl just say you were in the way?”

“I did not say she was in the way.”

“No, that was right, Edgar.....”

“However, Lydia, I will appear before Raven as long as I can. No matter what

happens. you must continue to hide or look for a chance to escape from here.”

“Just stay by me, I can protect Lydia.”

Kelpie then grabbed Lydia’s shoulder.

“No, I also want to go!”

Lydia, like a wayward child, pushed Kelpie away with her hands.

“Do you want to be killed by that boy?”

“That’s why, Kelpie, you must also fight Raven and force the sprite out with your power!”

“I’m sorry, but he seems to be a very ancient, very strong guy. So I don’t want to meddle in that.”

I do wonder whether or not it is a bird or a snake -- Kelpie certainly described the sprite in Raven’s body.

Then, something appeared in Lydia’s sight

“Ulya. Raven, too.”

Edgar followed Lydia’s gaze into the grove outside.

“Kelpie, thank you for your magnificent appearance for they seemed to have found us here.”

It appeared Ulya was not too far from the exit in the maze.

Edgar decided to head out. And then Lydia hurriedly grabbed his coat and pulled him.

“Wait, I have an important thing I forgot to say.....”

“Do you wish to marry me?”

“No!”

“It’s not it?”

It was obviously not the time to say such a thing, but he held an expression full of regret.

“Hurry up and go, Earl.”

Cutting them apart with his elbow, Kelpie interrupted, blocking near Edgar.

“It’s the serpent and the crow!”

In Raven’s dream, the the goddess’s incarnation, the hooded crow, had the eyes like Diopside when she fought with the snake in their battle.

In Raven’s soul, they were memories far in the past, which he didn’t know at all

himself.

“Living inside Raven’s body is the serpent and the hooded Carrion Crow!”

“What do you mean?”

“According to the legend, the three goddesses of war emerges as a hooded Carrion Crow. In Raven’s dream, I saw one of them. It was the third goddess, Morrigan. Moreover, it was the serpent that swallowed her. If that was what enclosed the goddess in the Diopside with fairy magic, then the legend must surely be true. In Raven’s body, there are two spirits. One of them is the serpent and the other is the carrion crow, the incarnation of the goddess!”

“That must mean.....Raven had the last remaining piece of the Diopside?”

“It should not be the stone itself. Although originally, it would have been a stone holding the sprite inside. Instead, it was placed into a human soul.”

In doing so, one of the three fragments of the Diopside became King and the others for his family guardian.

This was to allow the evil sprite to obey the human by all means.

“In other words.....Hidden within Raven himself, the dark sprite is the third Diopside stone of the war goddess?”

Perhaps from the cold sweat coming from him, Edgar placed his hand on his forehead.

If the three pieces of Diopside came together, the goddess would be resurrected.

“If that's the case, then Ulya has already collected all three pieces of Diopside. Originally, the Diopside’s force was able to suppress the enclosed magic hidden deep within the goddess. However, now that Ulya became the Diopside’s master, she may be able to order the release of the goddess.”

For Raven, he was not able to suppress the sprite’s obedience to Ulya’s will.

“Prince? Did he find out that Morrigan was hidden in Raven’s body?”

“If he had found out, how could he hand the last piece of Diopside to Ulya who has the other two?”

“So, Miss Ulya.....”

“It was a popular legend in her own people, so she may have noticed it. Moreover, her purpose is the rehabilitation of her own country, right? As long

as she has the power, even she will not need to rely on Prince....”

If Ulya intended to revive the goddess, and Raven cannot suppress his sprite, Edgar’s desire to win could only result in taking away Raven’s life.

If Raven died, the sprite that remained will swallow Morrigan before it becomes a host in another human and falls into a deep sleep. Therefore, Prince would not be able to get the goddess.

However, would Edgar be able to kill Raven? Even after knowing Raven’s weaknesses, even if Raven could not prepare himself to recover his consciousness, can Edgar bear to be cruel enough to kill him?

If not, then Edgar.....

“Hey, Edgar, the embodiment of the Carrion Crow goddess is one of the fairy ancestors. As long as it is concerning England’s fairies, it is my job.”

In any case, no matter how frightened she was, she was respectfully here with him.

Will I not be able to see him again? Her heart was haunted with a uneasy feeling.

“Don’t say stupid things, Lydia. In that case, I will also be forced to take you away. If you remain here, you will probably suddenly run out there in the battlefield.”

Kelpie, in order for her not to easily throw herself away from him, forcibly grabbed Lydia’s arm.

“Kelpie, Lydia’s my fiancée. Don’t pester and tease her.”

“So what? Are you willing to risk Lydia's safety when you're defeated? Moreover, it’s not like she's only in the presence of danger right now. Not only does the Nightmare remember the taste of her blood, waiting for a chance to come for her, your enemies may once again target Lydia as an enemy as well. Just give her to me. Until you can come see her, I will hide her in a safe place.”

Edgar sighed in irritation, but it was only for that moment. Then, he lifted his head.

“By the promise of the moonstone, if I wish to see Lydia, will you give her back to me immediately?”

“Well, if you’re still alive to come that is.” Kelpie smiled.

"No, Edgar, you cannot make a promise with a fairy!"

"It would be very troublesome if you brought her to a place I can't reach."

"If I could, I want to do that. However, thanks to the moonstone, I can't take Lydia to the fairy world. So, I'll just take her to her home in Scotland. You can go there, right?"

"No! Even in the human world, Kelpie can use fairy magic to tie me down."

Lydia said.

"Earl, you are Lydia's fiancée. Compared to fairy magic, isn't human love more powerful? Or do you not have any confidence?"

"Edgar, you said to me to stay by your side! At that time, when I went to leave together with Kelpie, I deeply regretted it because I thought I shouldn't have left you, so I deliberately hurried to come back!"

She desperately tried to reach out to him. However, he did not hold up her hand.

"I can't let you and the Earl die together."

Kelpie embraced Lydia who became unsettled.

As if in order to appease her, Edgar calmly said with a smile:

"Lydia, thank you. As long as these are your words, I can have hope. If you are looking forward to seeing me again, I promise you I cannot die. Even without fairy magic, I will try to find a way."

".....You liar. You always, always promise me so reassuringly like that! I don't believe it!"

Saying things like trying to think of way, when you obviously know nothing about fairy magic.

"I will not lie to you."

"Those words are a lie, too! Although you said you love me and you forcefully pursue me, but is it not because you were thinking of another woman that you hesitate to kiss me?!"

"No, Lydia....."

"I didn't know what to do, so I was a little afraid of becoming attracted to you. Because, I cannot believe what you say. However, I am still looking forward to the kiss, and that is the first time for me!"

Lydia refused to shy away, as she shouted while Kelpie dragged her away.

Edgar seemed as if he wanted to move towards Lydia. However, he only leaned his body for his feet did not move.

Just as desperate, he said:

“For me, it was also the first time. For fear that you wouldn’t be willing to forgive me, I didn’t even dare to kiss you!”

Startled, Lydia relaxed her strength which Kelpie then carried her on his shoulder.

“Please understand me, I was reborn as the Blue Knight Earl. You are my only hope for the future. No matter what happens, I don't want to lose you!”

“The deal is established, Earl.”

Kelpie placed his hand into a block in front of the wall of hedges. It slid open like a creature of branches. From there came a cave-like channel.

Kelpie, with only Lydia, opened the channel.

Lydia who couldn’t do anything, only shouted loudly:

“I.....want to get married! I want to marry you! So.....”

She was unable to control herself.

She wasn’t as passionate as Ermine. She was only fooling herself.

Even if she wasn’t Edgar’s favorite, she still wanted to remain in a place closest to him. Though he said he liked her, in fact, she was very willing to believe him. Even if she got hurt, it didn’t matter.

As she was brought into the cave, she cried as she repeatedly spoke her words of desiring marriage.

‘So, no matter what happens, do not despair. If I could become your hope, I would also like to become your true lover.....’

Chapter 7 - The Banquet Begins

Once Lydia and Kelpie's forms disappeared into the cave within the hedges, Edgar turned around to see Ulya and Raven standing in front of the fountain.

"Do not hide. Come out. Or is it that, you intend to continue running away, even now?" Ulya said challengingly.

Edgar slowly walked out of the maze of hedges.

In the moment he saw Edgar, Raven took out a knife.

In turn, Edgar took out the Merrows' sword as well. However, in his eyes, he only saw a small, agile young boy.

With no time to think, the boy swooped in and pounced like a feral beast.

He didn't seem as if he intended to defend himself from Edgar's blade.

Perhaps he noticed that Edgar wasn't willing to attack with a strike.

His sword just barely edged over Raven's shirt, but Ravens knife was aimed directly at Edgar's heart.

Edgar couldn't dodge in time, and his chest received a heavy blow.

Edgar retreated as he tried to endure the pain from the wound and control his breathing.

Raven inspected his dented blade in surprise and looked at Edgar warily.

Was it because of Coblynau's armor?

Edgar, placing his hand on his chest, confirmed the presence of the piece of metal in his pocket.

Without it, the blow would have killed him.

Tactics such as changing according to situations was useless against Raven.

The next time, he would aim at Edgar's unprotected head.

Raven immediately rushed at him with murderous intent. Readjusting his stance, Edgar focused on the left side of the sprite, its blind spot.

As Raven had came at him with this knife, Edgar evaded it and, at the same time, sidestepped to the left.

As long as he was on Raven's left side, in order to keep Edgar within his sights, Raven must turn around to look at him.

At that moment, Edgar slashed at him with his sword.

The sword struck the knife, and the knife was flung away.

However, Raven felt no fear or anxiety from losing his weapon.

As he watched Edgar's movements, he turned to the left, and leaped.

When Edgar's back was left open to attack, he felt a hand on the back of his neck.

In an instant, Edgar's mind blurred.

Just as he felt the pain of a fall reverberating throughout his body, Raven had already pinned him down and held his retrieved knife at the Earl's neck.

"Do not kill him. He is to be taken to Prince as a gift."

Raven obediently heeded Ulya's instructions, ridding himself from his murderous intent. However, in order to stop any movement from Edgar, he kept his knife pointed at his vitals.

When Ulya approached, she smiled in satisfaction.

"Prince may believe that I am a traitor because I have already obtained the goddess, but I do not wish to be his enemy. Earl, if I hand your over to him, would he make a deal with me?"

"The goddess is a fairy that had formed a contract with Prince. It is not what you imagine it to be."

"As my clan's faithful, loyal sprite of the Diopside has already fused with the goddess, I now have all three pieces of the Diopside. Therefore, the sprite and the goddess are both mine."

Dark-green Diopside, the hint of green that appears in Raven's dark pupils.

Gazing at the emotionless eyes of the youth before him, Edgar fully understood now. This was the third stone.

The sprite within his body contains both Ceylon's demon king and the Celtic goddess.

However, Raven's Diopside stone is totally different from Ulya's. The soul was not a stone, and it cannot be claimed as one of the king's belongings.

Edgar, regardless of the knife grazing his neck, moved his body.

Since he had already received orders not to kill him, Raven slightly moved away his knife.

Then, Edgar aimed for his right eye, hitting it with all the strength he could muster. Raven stumbled back a few steps but did not suffer any serious harm. Even so, he most likely couldn't see clearly with that eye, for now. Taking the chance, Edgar stood up.

With his sword in hand, he dropped to his stance.

“Miss Ulya, you've made a mistake. Ordering Raven to refrain from killing the target will only confuse him.”

From the beginning, Raven's sprite was used as a killing machine precisely because it couldn't show any mercy. To ask him not to kill could only limit his abilities and actions.

Narrowing his eyes, as he diligently confirmed Raven as an opponent, Edgar launched a frontal attack with his sharp sword at hand.

This time, Edgar was serious. He had already made his decision.

If Raven didn't wake up, Edgar would personally kill him with his own hands.

“Kill him, Raven. Your master is me. If you wish to obey that person over there, that'll have to wait until after my death.” Edgar told him.

If Raven counterattacked, and Edgar was killed by him, then he would violate Ulya's orders. In other words, it was impossible for the sprite to act.

So, if Edgar was killed, it may also prove that Raven had a chance to control the sprite. Then, he could be sure to wake up as well.

However, if Ulya's command was carried out as his first priority, Raven could not fight back. By that point, Edgar's sword would cut through him.

Edgar was betting on that moment.

Ulya seemed to finally understand what he was trying to do and smacked her lips.

Panicking, she shouted:

“Hear me, demon king of Hadiya. Resurrect together with the goddess!”

“Raven, you are neither the demon king nor Morrigan. You are Raven, that is what I named you. You are the master of your sprite!”

He must never let the goddess resurrect. And he must never hand Raven over

to evil fairies.

Filled with such determination, Edgar wielded his sharp sword.

Hearing the sounds of wings flapping above, the lost youth looked up towards the sky.

Black wings.

It wasn't the Carrion Crow that he had seen so much of lately.

It was a raven.

Dignified, it spread its two wings and brazenly, it flew and cut through the sky, as if it was the king of the world. Under the shadow of the black forest, even the wind ceased to blow and the surrounding trees were motionless.

Suddenly, the air became still.

At that point, the young boy remembered.

The first time he was called by the name Raven was by Edgar.

"I found your master."

His sister brought a handsome noble boy before him.

"I will give you a new name, for your new life."

Then, Edgar became Raven's guardian.

Mysterious, powerful, and precise.

Whenever their companions or acquaintances asked for the strange origin of Raven's name, Edgar would answer like this:

The youth's black hair and brown skin made the name seem very suitable for him.

Hearing that, they no longer questioned about it.

However, it was Raven himself was proud of the hidden meaning in his new name.

How could he have forgotten that now?

"From now on, I hope you can dominate your spirit."

That was his first command.

What was he doing in this place, far away from his master?

Lord Edgar.....

Raven whispered.

"Lord Edgar....."

The moment he swung his sword down, Edgar heard the sound of Raven's voice.

He immediately slackened his hold on his sword.

The blade nicked Raven's ear, as Edgar embraced the knife wielding youth.

In a counter position, Raven rushed over in front of him.

As if to overthrow him by attacking him back, Raven tried to strike him. From there, Edgar and Raven then twisted and wrestled together, with Edgar's back hitting a tree trunk.

However, the knife barely stopped before Edgar.

Finally, Raven gasped and looked up at him.

".....Raven?"

Widening his eyes, Raven's eyebrows furrowed in pain.

"I..... won't leave your side ever again."

He lowered his eyes, only to move his line of sight for a moment, to glance at Ulya, who remained standing behind them.

"Please leave the matter to me."

Edgar put away his sword in compliance to his words.

Meanwhile, Raven quickly pulled away at a great distance.

And instantly, he changed direction, heading straight towards Ulya to attack.

She silently fell down.

The knife was stabbed directly into her lungs. However, she was still alive and conscious.

It wasn't that Raven had missed his mark. Rather, he had purposely gave her a little time before her breathing stopped. This way, Ulya may have something to say.

The two pieces of the Diopside fell from her hands and rolled onto the ground.

Edgar picked them up and found them to be fake.

"This is just a regular glass bead. If it was the Diopside, it should be transparent enough to see double images."

"I.....was deceived....."

Making an effort, she squeezed out a hoarse voice.

Of course, they were initially real when given to her. However, somewhere

along the way just prior to coming here, they must have been switched.

“You must have noticed that Prince was not to be believed, right? Prince must have hidden the third piece of Diopside.” Ulya said.

However, Prince intended to make full use of Ulya. Having her join in this act of war to stir up drama between Edgar and Raven. Even if Ulya was the one to win, he planned to deceive her while she remained on his side.

In order to further make use of her.

Ulya suddenly laughed helplessly.

“Earl....Prince wishes to turn London into ruins...”

“What is he going to do? The third piece of Diopside and Hadiya’s power both belong to Raven. I already know I must stop the battle from the resurrection of the goddess.”

“...to...London Bridge...”

“What?”

However, Ulya could only slightly shake her head. No longer able to bear the pain, in trembling lips, she said in a soft voice:

“Kill me.”

“Raven, that’s enough.”

Edgar, standing next to Ulya, looked up to the sky. The balloon was still hovering nearby.

Seeing this turn of events, Prince must have not known what to think.

In the end, he held the goddess of Badb in one hand and Macha in the other.

“Raven, Prince is not taking his revenge against me. Rather, he came to England to carry out a scheme he’s been devising for many years.”

Putting away his knife, Raven stood next to Edgar.

“Is it to continue the war from one hundred years ago?”

“It should be.”

London Bridge, how should one say it...

In the past, it was the Vikings that overthrew the King and seized London. However, the King was able to reclaim the capital city by capturing the London Bridge.

Did he intend to repeat history?

Nearly 100 years ago, when Prince Stuart almost failed to arrive to London, the evil Prince intended to return.

Prince's banquet has only just begun.



Kelpie galloped swiftly across the field, carrying Lydia on his back.

At the foot of the distant mountain, the side of the train could be seen, spewing out black smoke as it moved.

Where in the world is this place?

Lydia, who had been crying while mumbling the word “marriage”, instantly became shy and awkward the moment she was all alone with Kelpie.

Also, perhaps due to Kelpie's magic, Lydia was almost unable to move.

It felt like she was in water. The air around felt heavy, and she could barely move her hands and feet.

Like this, Kelpie forced her to stay on his back and kept on running.

After finally calming down, she understood now. Had she stayed, she wouldn't have been much help.

At that moment, the most important thing had been the bond between Edgar and Raven. Whether Edgar could awaken Raven from his dream or not was the key to their fate.

Lydia believed that if Edgar focused his mind on that, he would be able to succeed.

The two of them would surely be safe.

“Kelpie, do you intend to go to Scotland?”

As if he were surprised that Lydia would take the initiative to speak, Kelpie turned his head back slightly.

“Oh, of course.”

“It's getting dark soon.”

“I know.”

“But I don't want to sleep outside in the open country field.”

“Don't worry about it. I intend to run all night.”

Hearing those words, she could do nothing but sleep on Kelpie's back.

Although she wouldn't fall when she slept, she still knew that she would feel exhausted once she got home.

She suddenly pondered about how she was now on a journey with a tireless water horse.

However, she knew Kelpie seriously cared for her well-being. She also knew that he was using a completely different and more aggressive approach with her because she was being targeted, and her situation was very dangerous.

He clearly was a ferocious water horse, but what a strange fairy he was.

“.....If you were a human being, I might hesitate to marry him.”

“If I was a human being, you would choose me?”

Even so, she would probably choose Edgar.

Was it strange for her to think so?

Even though he is a fickle man who enjoys playing around with women, yet he is also strongly possessive. She really didn't know what to do with him.

“Lydia, the earl is only a silver-tongued bastard. If he doesn't come to pick you up, you don't need to feel sad.”

Edgar may not come. Even if Kelpie hadn't said it, Lydia's heart was haunted by the thought.

Whether they were lies or the truth, Edgar still used the same words, and the same sweet voice to whisper to her.

Even though it was something impossible, he would just promise that he would 'think of something'. Did he think that everything would be all right if that promise turned into a lie?

Was it irresponsible of him to promise to take her back?

No, it's not like that.

Edgar seems to simply make promises, but it is in order to prevent the people around him from falling into despair. And in order to keep his promise, he would carry it out with endless effort for their sake.

When escaping from Prince with his companions, and when he continued to fight, he must have repeated to himself that he “will succeed” to strengthen himself and continue on.

It was because of this that people would follow him. Raven and Ermine as well,

must have followed him for that reason.

Having to lose them and Ermine, being unable to bring all of them happiness, he understood with regret that his promises became lies.

Even so, he still continued to lie.

In order to accomplish his promises once and for all.

“Edgar will come.”

She mumbled as she suddenly understood.

“Do you believe in those lies?”

Edgar’s optimistic words were filled with genuine hopes. Therefore, Lydia couldn’t see those words as lies.

“Kelpie, we’re already truly engaged. This is different from before.”

Can I believe in that?

Lydia looked up at the orange tinted, twilight sky.



“Lord Edgar, please forgive me.”

Raven suddenly knelt down as he spoke those words. He said it countless times since yesterday.

After resuming his work as an entourage, he would find scars and bruises on Edgar’s body. With a very startled expression, he would immediately start apologizing to Edgar.

“I told you to not mind, didn't I?”

In order to cover his neck injury, Edgar put on his tie.

“However, to allow my master to be wounded is sacrilege. Although you do not blame me, I still feel at fault.”

“Did I not also hurt you?”

Edgar stretched out his warm hand and gently lifted Raven’s front bangs.

“Does it hurt? Over here.”

Surprised, Raven tilted his head to the side.

“Your bruised right-eye, it is still swollen.”

He put his hand over to cover his eyelid. As if it was the first time he felt pain, he frowned and furrowed his brows.

“That was why Tomkins gave you the ice to apply on it.”

He said in tone full of empathy.

“Raven, did you not look in the mirror?”

“Because..... I did not have a chance to look in the mirror.”

Did you not have a chance or did you decide not to?

Well, for Raven, mirrors did not seem to be essential in his daily life.

Edgar pushed the surprised Raven in front of the mirror, who finally came to understand.

“The maids kept glancing at my face, so I thought that it must have been strange.”

That was certainly like Raven to say so.

Edgar suddenly felt the urge to laugh.

“Therefore, this incident of hurting each other, let’s not mention it for now, alright?”

Edgar chuckled for the moment. Then, approaching the window, he closed it shut.

In reality, right now, he couldn’t truly laugh from his heart.

Lydia was not by his side. Moreover, Prince was in England.

Outside the window was the scene of a calm city, unknowing of Prince's presence.

Due to the constant news, events, and gossip, the murders on London Bridge gradually faded away from the people’s memories. After all, since Mr. Kent, there had been no other victims.

However, because the London Bridge was the core to Prince’s plan, it still had to be properly observed from now on.

There may be more victims that could appear.

Of course, there were some good news too.

Prince still did not know that Raven was the third piece of Diopside.

Thanks to Lydia’s special abilities, Edgar realized the secret and was able to recapture Raven.

If they would be able to prevent the resurrection of the goddess, his side could hope for victory.

In any case, they must win.

Edgar firmly resolved in his heart silently.

This was not for London or England, but for Raven and his companions in Scarlett Moon.

And it was also for the Blue Knight Earl's family, which had given him a second chance.

And most importantly --- for Lydia.

For Lydia, who had just formally agreed to marry him, and her happiness.

“Master, I’ve booked the train ticket and I have already sent someone to deliver the notification letter.”

Tomkins appeared in the room holding a cashmere wool coat.

Edgar draped the coat over his white silk collar, and pinned his well-engraved cameo brooch to it. This attire was generally for whenever a noble made an official visit to another noble.

“Are you going out, Lord Edgar?”

Raven asked in surprise. There were no special arrangements for an official visit today.

“Yes. Because it is an important visit for the future. You must not be negligent, as well.”

“Yes. Where do you wish to visit?”

“Cambridge.”

Raven started to question himself about the important nobles that lived at Cambridge.

“It's Professor Carlton.”

“Oh.”

Raven said, with an incredulous expression. Though he is indeed an important figure, he was not a noble.

As an Earl, Edgar was not required to send a notification letter in advance for an official visit, as Professor Carlton was not a noble.

“Before I can pick up Lydia, I must see the professor.”

Edgar glanced at Nico who was casually lying on the lounge chairs near the window.

“Hey Nico, don’t you feel the same way?”

“Ah? Who knows? The situation is still not confirmed, so it’s hard to say.”

Lydia was brought back to Scotland by Kelpie, and he must have cast some kind of magic so that Edgar could not easily reach her. Therefore, he believed that in order to bring her back, he needed the assistance from the professor.

“Then, hurry up and confirm it.”

Even though Lydia clearly knew how dangerous it was to be with him, seeing that he was targeted by Prince, but she still accepted his proposal.

Although he couldn’t fully guarantee Lydia’s safety now, Raven had returned safely. With a more stable and strengthened defense now, he wanted to meet her early.

“I am not your subordinate. If Lydia is in a safe place, I have no need to rush.”

Nico seemed very fond of the velvet-covered chair. Rubbing his cheek against the top of the furniture, he simply did not intend to move. Only this raffish cat could say even more arrogant words.

“However, the water horse’s magic is very troublesome and difficult, isn’t it? Did you not properly consider the consequences when you let him take her away?”

If things were to go as smoothly as expected, then one didn’t have to work so hard. Regardless, Edgar believed that he had made the best decision at the time.

He had been desperate and cornered, so he felt he didn’t really have any other choice. Moreover, with the moonstone engagement ring, he believed Kelpie wouldn't be able to do anything to Lydia, so Edgar decided to let her go. But it was also not his intention to let her remain at Kelpie's side for long.

Therefore, he was now trying to cook up the best strategy they could use to get her back.

“Nico, it is not such a troublesome thing, depending on how you handle it.”

“Then, what do you propose to do?”

“Coblynau told me that if we are formally engaged, the power of the moonstone ring will increase. If that force is more powerful than Kelpie’s binding magic, then I will be able to bring Lydia back.”

Looking to Raven, Edgar meaningfully asked:

“Do you understand the meaning of a formal engagement?”

“That is, Miss Lydia had formally agreed to get married?”

“She has agreed.”

“.....That's... really, congratulations.”

Raven spoke the words clearly with suspicion. He certainly looked like he was happy but still a little uneasy.

He must have been worrying about what to do if Lydia was angered when Edgar had forced her to agree to marrying him.

Edgar, who was slightly irked by Raven’s response, turned to Tomkins.

“Tomkins, do you believe it?”

“Of course. But, master, will Professor Carlton believe it?”

Tomkins did not seem to believe it either.

In that case, whether the professor would believe Edgar’s claim or not was indeed a problem.

Moreover, he wished to confirm with Lydia, but that was also very difficult to do at the moment.

“Yes, it is true. Raven, you are a witness.”

“But I did not hear Miss Lydia’s answer.”

“Pretend that you did.”

“Won’t Miss Lydia get angry afterwards?”

“Is your master Lydia?”

Silent, Raven must have certainly felt very embarrassed and troubled.

Though Edgar didn’t intend to withdraw his command, he knew Raven could not disobey him anyway.

“It is an official engagement as long as the professor consents. Lydia is a minor, so she cannot get married without her father’s permission.”

In fact, the one who couldn’t believe Lydia’s agreement to the marriage the most was Edgar himself.

At that time, she was forcibly being taken away by Kelpie. Once she calms down, she would probably regret agreeing to it.

However, even if that were the case, Edgar intended to push forward with the future arrangements anyway.

Because no matter what happened, he did not intend to let her go.

He believed that, though she was hesitant now, she should be willing to get married someday.

“Well, it’s time to go. Otherwise, you’ll miss the train.”

Edgar said, as he stuffed his pocket watch back in his pocket. He then grabbed Nico by the scruff and lifted him up.

“Hey, Earl, what are you doing!”

“Tomkins, take this as hand luggage. Ship him by train to the Carlton’s house in Scotland.”

“Oh, stop it, ah, I’ll go! I’m going now!”

As soon as he let go of his hands, Nico escaped, disappearing without a trace.

Edgar then retrieved his walking cane and hat from Tomkins.

Everything lied in the future.

Because his future with Lydia depended on the outcome of their battle with Prince.

Credits

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